MORE PUZZLES, MORE FUN FULL PAGE IN LIFE

WEEK IN REVIEW THIS WEEK'S TOP NEWS, 5A

USA TODAY WEEKEND

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EMMA MCINTYRE/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME

De Niro talks crime and fatherhood

Star of "Whisper Man" chats about how he picks projects and what shows he's watching. **In Life**

In 1776, Declaration was breaking news

What is a historic document to us had crowds eager to hear it read aloud. **In Weekend Extra**

Theme park keeps Parton legacy alive

Beloved singer saw Dollywood as way to celebrate her roots, create jobs and give back. **In Money**

Susan Page
Washington Bureau Chief
USA TODAY

Will war haunt Trump's legacy?

At 6-month mark in Iran, lessons have been stark

The twists and turns of the war in Iran, six months in, should come as no surprise.

President Donald Trump is just the latest commander in chief to see the vision of a decisive military campaign risk becoming a longer and more complicated conflict – one that could end up defining his legacy in the White House, like it or not.

Think Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq.

After the United States struck Iran on Feb. 28, President Donald Trump said the war would end within weeks. KYLIE COOPER/REUTERS

"This is a president who failed to learn the lessons from past presidents when it comes to a military deployment," Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff for President Bill Clinton and defense secretary for President Barack Obama, told USA TODAY.

"He had no clear objective, no clear strategy to achieve that objective, and no endgame, and that has been the fundamental mistake that's been made in the past Middle Eastern wars and is being made again in this war in Iran."

To be clear, the Iranian campaign hasn't approached the time and costs of those earlier conflicts. The wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan each stretched for more than 19 years, and the Iraq War lasted more than eight.

"This is not Iraq. This is not endless," Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth assured reporters in the war's first week. "Our generation knows better, and so does this president."

But Iran already shares some traits with what became known as "forever wars," the sort of entanglement candidate Trump promised never to repeat. Victory hasn't been quick and doesn't seem certain.

As Operation Epic Fury approaches the half-year mark, here are four hard lessons for Trump – ones his modern-day predecessors would recognize, some of them ruefully.

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Stalemate 6 months in: What happens now?

Analysts explain why U.S.-Iran conflict can't be compared with other wars. **3A**

Who really runs college football?

These 25 people wield great influence and have the ability to shape the sport's future

From left: SEC commissioner Greg Sankey, College GameDay analyst Pat McAfee and BIG10 commissioner Tony Petitti. ILLUSTRATION BY SPENCER HOLLADAY, USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

John Brice USA TODAY

In today's college sports landscape, power no longer resides solely on the sidelines or in the commissioner's office. It sits in television boardrooms, law firms, courtrooms, congressional hearing rooms and donor suites. A judge can reshape athlete compensation and eligibility with a ruling. A television executive can redefine a conference's future with a media rights deal. An agent can trigger a bidding war. A senator can influence the rules governing the entire industry. ● The people steering college sports have never been more diverse, or more influential. ● A panel of regional and national members of the USA TODAY Sports Network consulted industry sources, debated candidates and cast votes to identify the individuals exerting the greatest influence over the direction of college athletics.

See NCAA FOOTBALL, Page 4A

IN SPORTS

Sleeper teams have shot at national title

Consider these four programs for college football national championship, Toppmeyer writes.

Americans are still spending to find joy

U.S. consumers are "joy pressured," a new survey says, meaning their finances are making it harder to access and sustain joy. GREG WOHLFORD/USA TODAY NETWORK

But comfort comes with dose of guilt, survey says

Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

Even as credit card debt and cost of living concerns mount, Americans are still spending on things that bring them joy.

They've just got a bit of guilt while doing so.

While 6% feel they are overspending on things that make them happy, 72% say they feel guilty when those purchases compete with other financial goals, according to a YouGov survey of more than 5,000 U.S. adults conducted for Ally Bank's inaugural Cost of Life Today report, first shared exclusively with USA TODAY.

That tug-of-war helps explain why

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Collapse of glacier may have triggered deadly Nepal flood

Debris flow's power stuns experienced researchers

Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

A drone view shows mud covering buildings on Aug. 27 following devastating floods at Trishuli in Nuwakot district, Nepal.
NAVESH CHITRAKAR/REUTERS

The volume and speed of the wall of mud, boulders and debris that rushed more than 60 miles down a river through Nepal on Aug. 26 shocked even experienced researchers who study mountains, glaciers and waterways in the Himalayas.

"The force of this thing is just almost incomprehensible," said Alton Byers, a faculty research scientist at the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research at the University of Colorado at Boulder. It's "one of the largest events" of its kind that he's seen in some 30 years of research, Byers told USA TODAY.

Communities were devastated, nearly 1,500 are missing and at least 165 have been reported dead, Reuters reported. According to authorities, among the missing are at least 800 foreigners, including dozens of Americans.

The working theory is that a glacial collapse was the source of the debris flow that washed away buildings, cars and people with incredible speed and force, scientists told USA TODAY.

While some scientists said it's too soon to definitively link the event to the region's warming climate, Byers noted that flood events of various origins are being seen with "increasing frequency and magnitude" as the Himalayas – Sanskrit for abode of snow – and other high mountain regions warm faster than most of the world.

Exactly what triggered the collapse and the full set of cascading events that led to the flooding remains uncertain. "There's some really good ideas about what may have happened, but we won't know the exact series of events that led to this flood for days, possibly weeks," Byers said.

It appears a massive ice and rock debris flow plummeted from a high altitude near the point where the Bhote Koshi River flows into Nepal, north of Kathmandu. The preliminary details are laid out in a rapid assessment provided to the government of Nepal, written by Jeffrey Kargel with the Tucson, Arizona-based Planetary Science Institute, in collaboration with an international group of scientists.

According to Kargel's summary, there were two sources of initial materials, both near the Langtang Lirung peak in the Nepalese Himalayas near the border with Tibet, one a rock source very near the peak and the other glacier ice and snow a few kilometers to the east. "There may have been extensive failure all along the area in between."

Scientists are drawing the conclusions based on satellite images of the peak and a seismic event in the vicinity at 8:37 a.m. local time. Originally recorded as an earthquake, the seismic event was a 5.2 magnitude landslide, a glacial collapse and debris flow, the U.S. Geological Survey reported.

That failure sent a huge volume of rock and ice – an estimated 13 million cubic yards to 10 times that or more – hurtling down the mountain with speeds that may have exceeded 186 miles per hour at times, Kargel wrote. That's the equivalent of at least 500,000 large dump truck loads of rock and ice at a minimum, and it would have swept up even more rock, debris and water as it surged down the mountain and along the river.

Given the available information, the most likely mechanism for the flooding is a glacier collapse, said Dan McGrath, an associate professor in the geosciences department at Colorado State University. The ice would have melted during its cascade, "providing the source water for the flood."

Glacial flow is "a hyper-concentrated slurry" like cement, moving with unbelievable, destructive force, unleashing boulders "as big as houses," Byers said.

Water levels in the Bhote Koshi basin started rising rapidly around 9 a.m., according to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. Farther downstream, levels on the Trishuli River at one point reportedly rose by more than 27 feet in 30 minutes, according to the International Centre.

Scientists in several countries immediately started gathering satellite images for analysis, Byers said. The amount of video across social media is "quite unusual," and will help to document the sequence of events, he said.

They'll also need boots on the ground and in the air, via helicopter reconnaissance. Based on his own experience with previous flood investigations in the Himalayas, Byers said researchers will need to obtain permission from China to go upriver into Tibet, and they'll need to visit and talk with local communities about what happened. "Then you weave all that together and you come up with a pretty good idea of what happened," he said.

While acknowledging that climate change is altering glaciers, snow conditions, permafrost and mountain slopes in the region, the International Centre said it's "too early to determine what role climate change played in this specific event."

Researchers have linked previous flooding events in the region to the effects of warming on glacier loss and glacial lakes, including two catastrophic floods in the past two years, one in August 2024 in Nepal's Everest region and another in Tibet on July 8, 2025.

Byers suggested the massive debris and ice landslide could be linked to the melting of permafrost at the highest elevations, "like taking a stick of butter out of the fridge and putting it on the counter."

Scientists have warned for years that permafrost is melting in the Arctic and high mountain regions of the world, with cascading impacts. "It's happening much faster than we had envisioned early on," Byers said.

After researchers published a study of a 1,578-foot tsunami and landslide in August 2025 in Southeast Alaska, the University of Alaska Fairbanks wrote that the likelihood of similar large-scale events has "increased substantially across the North as glaciers retreat and permafrost degrades."

A recent international study presented evidence that "permafrost is thawing across much of the planet." The research, published in the journal "Nature Communications Earth & Environment," used more than two decades of research from the Arctic, Antarctic and high mountain regions. Permafrost, a layer of ground made up of soil, rock and sediment, underlies nearly 15% of the land surface in the Northern Hemisphere.

Spending

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the average U.S. adult scored 54.2 out of 100 on Ally's new "Joy Index," placing consumers in "joy pressured" territory, meaning financial pressure is making joy harder to access and sustain. The survey found 77% of consumers reduce, delay, or avoid spending on joy at least occasionally.

Plus, spending might not be the end-all, be-all when compared to time with friends and family, the survey, which was conducted in July, found.

Affordability remains a constraint. Of respondents, 20% said it's easy to cover essential expenses, and although most reported spending on joyful experiences each month, only 15% said they are easy to afford.

"Worries about the cost of living are real, and because of them, people are getting more deliberate in their spending," Lee Stafford, Ally's chief economist, told USA TODAY. "A meaningful share are even cutting back on necessities to make room for the areas they value most. It's not that people are spending carelessly, instead, they're spending to protect something they've decided they can't afford to lose."

Can money buy happiness?

Overall, consumers' reported feelings of joy rose alongside their income levels, with a caveat.

Consumers with a "joy mindset" consistently scored higher than those without one and their experience scores, which measure how often they feel grateful and optimistic, were nearly identical whether they made under $50,000 or above $100,000 each year.

Other factors being similar, consumers with an "appreciation for the everyday," or a "joy mindset," according to Ally, had higher Joy Index scores when compared to those without the mindset.

"When you have that clarity of what's most important to you, you're able to transfer that into a life that creates joy," Jack Howard, Ally's head of money wellness. "Having that clarity and then making that connection creates that joy mindset."

A positive attitude only goes so far. Even for consumers with a joy mindset, their scores on the overall index, which also considers their level of financial security, rise in line with how much they make. For example, those who earned less than $50,000 annually but maintained a joy mindset scored 63 on the overall index, compared to those with the same attitude but earned more than $100,000, who scored 71.7.

Stafford said higher earners aren't feeling joy more deeply, but that they are paying less of an emotional and financial tax to get it.

"That's where we're seeing inequality persist today," he said. "The gap isn't the capacity for joy – it's in the friction and the guilt you have to push through to reach it."

Who feels most spending guilt?

While 68% of consumers said they think they spend the right amount of money on joy each month, or close to it, 72% still feel guilty about it.

This guilt is particularly common among women. A quarter of responding women felt a lot of guilt and about 75% of them said they felt some guilt.

Lindsay Sacknoff, Ally's president of consumer banking, said that may be because women often manage day-to-day household finances.

"If you think about playing that role, you see a lot of the earnings, the spending, the savings, the investing, and you see that big picture," Sacknoff said, adding there may be a connection between "how much information and how many folks are relying on you in the household to how you feel about it."

A little more than three-quarters of Gen Z and millennials both feel some amount of guilt spending on things that make them happy. But millennials are the generation most likely to feel a lot of guilt, at 23%. Gen X isn't far behind, with 74% reporting feeling some guilt and 22% saying they feel a lot.

Baby boomers stand out. At 63%, most still report feeling some amount of guilt, though 32% said spending on joy is "completely worth the cost."

"For that generation, you've had more experiences, more time to make money through the ups and downs," Howard said. "Now, you're enjoying the fruits of your labor."

Which generations find most joy?

With the lowest guilt levels, boomers also ranked highest on the overall Joy Index with a score of 57.1.

Despite making the least of any generation, Gen Z earned an overall Joy Index score of 55.2. Gen Z spends on joy most frequently and actively plans for it. At 56%, most have a dedicated line item for joy in their budget, compared to 46% of millennials, 32% of Gen X, and 29% of boomers.

Boomers spend the most on joy each month, with an average spend of $298. But again, Gen Z is not far behind. They spend an average of $295 per month. Millennials spend $287 on average, while Gen X spends the least, with an average spend of $259.

Gen Z may feel guilty because they recognize they're making a trade-off between planning for the future and enjoying the present, according to Shikha Jain, a Simon-Kucher partner and lead of the consumer sector for North America.

"But a lot of younger people are also saying they don't know what the future is going to hold and what life is going to have in store for them, and the way things are going, it's not super hopeful," Jain said. "So, why not spend today? ...There's a little bit of that YOLO effect going on."

The survey found that overall, 54% of consumers try to balance enjoyment today and long-term financial goals, even if it means making slower progress.

Where are people pulling back?

Americans are still finding ways to spend on things that make them happy, but the money must come from somewhere.

While 47% said they look for lower-cost ways to experience joy and 42% said they save up to afford it, 20% said they cut back on necessities and 13% said they take on credit card debt.

The survey found that over the prior three months, consumers had dialed back their spending in several areas. Of the respondents, 38% cut spending on dining out, 34% reduced their shopping or retail splurges, 27% spent less on entertainment, 25% cut back on travel, 21% reduced their spending on hobbies, and 21% cut home improvement projects.

The results suggest consumers often prefer to spend on things that bring them connection. Over the same three months, only 17% cut back on social time with friends, 11% reduced the amount they spend helping others, and just 9% spent less on their pets.

"When Americans feel conflicted about spending on joy, they don't just sit with the discomfort, they redirect it," Stafford said. "People will sacrifice the material and the expensive before they give up rest, relationships, and the everyday moments that actually sustain them."

What Americans consider 'luxury'

Extra money, more time, and fewer financial worries. Those are what Americans consider signs of abundance, the survey found.

Asked "what feels like luxury today," the top answer among respondents was taking a vacation. But the second most common answer was simply having money left over after paying bills at the end of the month.

"Having money left over means I have the luxury of choice," Sacknoff said, adding that people viewing vacations as a luxury highlights the value they place on experiences, rather than material things.

Being able to save money while still enjoying life and eating out without worrying about the bill followed close behind the top two answers. Consumers also said that it's luxurious to have free time, spend money on hobbies, and buy high-quality ingredients at the store.

However, those luxuries aren't what respondents said bring them the most joy. Spending time with family and their partner or spouse beat out all other answers, the survey found.

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1. The exit can be hard to find

Three days after the war began with U.S. and Israeli strikes Feb. 28, Trump was asked how long it would last.

"We're already substantially ahead of our time projections, but whatever the time is, it's OK," he told reporters at the White House. Four to five weeks, he projected, "but we have capability to go far longer than that."

The timetable has taken longer than he predicted because the goals have proven elusive. That is the same calculation that made it difficult for President Lyndon B. Johnson and President Richard Nixon to negotiate an end to Vietnam, and for President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama to justify leaving Afghanistan even after political support at home had eroded.

In Iran, though many top leaders have been killed, the same Islamic theocracy remains in firm control. The status of its nuclear program, degraded by bombing strikes in 2025, hasn't changed. And this has gotten worse: Tehran has been able to significantly disrupt traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial waterway that before the war offered safe and free passage for about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

That has roiled global energy markets and driven up the cost of gas in the United States. As long as Iran continues to defy the president's military and economic reprisals, it will be hard for the White House to credibly claim "mission accomplished."

"Making sure Iran can't make a nuclear weapon is very important to this country and the world," veteran Republican pollster David Winston told USA TODAY. "But now at month six, there's a sense of – given what was said when it started – why has it taken so much longer, and what's the plan?"

2. Military superiority doesn't guarantee victory

In an echo of those earlier wars, the United States has dominated the battle from the start.

But that didn't translate to a quick strategic victory, then or now. The adversaries' willingness to endure pain and the determination of their leaders to survive have sometimes enabled them to play a long game, outwaiting American patience.

Anger over the Vietnam War at home consumed the presidencies of Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon.
CONSOLIDATED NEWS PICTURES VIA AFP

Two years after Nixon withdrew troops from Vietnam in 1973, South Vietnamese allies would surrender to the Communist north. In Iraq, Obama's withdrawal of forces from Iraq in 2011 has been followed by insurgencies, sectarian conflict and violence. In Afghanistan, the Taliban government was quickly toppled after 9/11, yet it still became America's longest war.

Even as President Joe Biden ordered the final U.S. forces out in 2021, a chaotic withdrawal that marked a stain on his presidency, the Taliban were emerging to take control again.

In Iran, too, the limits of military superiority are being tested.

"We've beaten and completely decimated Iran," Trump declared in an address to the nation on day 33 of the war.

But five months later, Tehran is still using missiles and drones to strike U.S. targets and its allies in the region.

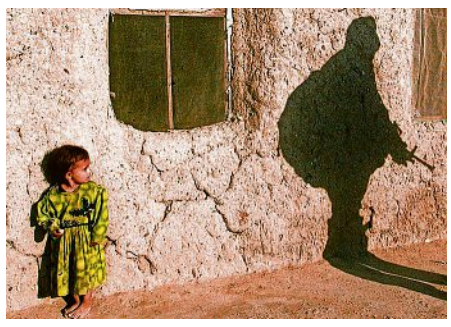
In recent days, the White House has turned from military strikes to economic sanctions. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Aug. 24 announced "the single greatest financial offensive ever marshaled against an adversary."

Will what he called "an economic D-Day" for Iran succeed where bombs have failed?

3. The kitchen table still rules: It's the economy

When the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began, they commanded broad public support. That rally-round-the-flag sentiment at a time of peril would shatter as time passed.

On Iran, though, the military strikes were viewed skeptically from the start. The war has never commanded major-



The U.S. war in Afghanistan after 9/11 stretched for more than 19 years before American forces withdrew.
SCOTT NELSON/GETTY IMAGES

ity support, and it has fueled questions about Trump's leadership.

At the beginning, only 27% in a Reuters survey supported the attacks, while a 43% plurality opposed them and nearly a third of Americans were undecided. A 56% majority said Trump was too quick to use force.

In the August poll, support was at 31%. Trump's approval rating, at 33%, matched the lowest level of his first or second terms.

Rising opposition to the Vietnam War during LBJ's tenure would spark huge demonstrations on college campuses and contribute to Nixon's election to the White House in 1968. Opposition to the Iraq War during Bush's tenure helped Democrats win back control of the House and Senate in 2006. He called it "a thumpin'."

Then, as now, a Republican president was waging an unpopular war at a time of economic unease.

In 2024 the GOP won the Washington trifecta – control of the White House, the House and the Senate – in large part with an economic appeal. "It was basically to fix the Biden economy," Winston said, amid concern about inflation. "Is there a sense that there's been enough progress made?"

Republicans are expressing concerns, and more often out loud, that Trump's focus is out of sync with voters' concerns.

"Not even a little bit," the president said when he was asked whether financial pressure on Americans was motivating him to reach a deal with Iran. "The only thing that matters when I'm talking about Iran, they can't have a nuclear weapon. I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anybody. I think about one thing. We cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all."

But in an Emerson College poll in August, the issue voters ranked the nation's top concern was the economy; 37% cited jobs and inflation and taxes. Threats to democracy and health care were second and third at 16% each.

Foreign policy was ninth, at less than 2%.

4. Wars can consume presidential legacies

LBJ enacted the most far-reaching domestic programs in modern history, landmark achievements that included Medicare, Medicaid, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.

But his presidency is remembered, first and foremost, by Vietnam.

"That bitch of a war killed the lady I really loved, the Great Society," he told historian Doris Kearns Goodwin after he had left the White House.

President John F. Kennedy had sent military advisers to support the anti-communist government in South Vietnam, but it was Johnson who dramatically expanded the U.S. commitment into a full-scale war with bombing campaigns and a deployment of American troops that would reach more than 500,000.

He saw no good options, unable to withdraw for fear of the strategic consequences but facing an American public bitterly divided by the war.

Trump is clear about what he considers his biggest achievements: a soaring stock market, a historic tariffs regime, sweeping immigration enforcement, record tax cuts and the physical stamp he is making on official Washington with everything from a White House ballroom to, perhaps, a triumphal arch.

"A lot of people are saying that I'm one of the greatest presidents ever," he told Punchbowl News in August.

But the war in Iran, with its consequences still unfolding, may stand in the first line of assessments of his presidency.

"I think the reality is that Iran is going to join that list of failed wars in the Middle East," including Iraq and Afghanistan, Panetta said. "And just as it's impacted on the legacy of past presidents, it'll impact on the legacy of Donald Trump."

Susan Page, Washington Bureau chief of USA TODAY, has covered 12 presidential elections and interviewed 10 presidents. Her latest book, "The Queen and Her Presidents," was published by Harper in April.

'Unconventional' war with Iran may never see a winner

Both sides are creating, and experiencing, pain

Kim Hjelmgaard
USA TODAY

LONDON – If you aren't winning a war, does that mean you're losing it?

Washington and Tehran are both wrestling with that question six months into their fight: one side is struggling to turn military superiority into lasting political gains, while the other may need only to survive to claim victory.

Neither side can ultimately win, some veteran Iran analysts say, because the United States and Iran are trapped in a pattern in which Washington believes that overwhelming force and sanctions will eventually compel a weaker country to submit. Iran, meanwhile, has proved as resilient and willing to endure an open-ended war as many seasoned Iran-watchers predicted before hostilities erupted in February.

"This war can't be assessed like other wars. It's very unconventional. It's not about who's winning and who's losing. The two sides are creating costs for each other on different fronts," said Omid Memarian, a senior Iran-born analyst at DAWN, a think tank based in Washington, DC, that watchdogs U.S. foreign policy in the region.

"The U.S. is far stronger than Iran militarily, but Iran has asymmetric capabilities that have created problems and costs for the U.S. – and we haven't seen all of those capabilities yet," he said.

The war in Iran is now one of endurance and economic leverage. It has no obvious outcome.

The initial strikes were ordered by President Donald Trump in coordination with Israel, which had already been exchanging strikes with the Middle Eastern country after Tel Aviv launched a surprise attack on Iranian military and nuclear facilities. They decapitated Iran's leadership without collapsing it. They set back Iran's nuclear and missile programs without fully destroying them. Maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint for the world's supply of oil and natural gas, remains blocked by Tehran, though U.S. Navy patrols appear to be making some progress in enabling more shipping traffic to pass through the area.

Clionadh Raleigh, a professor of conflict at the University of Sussex, England, who created the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, which analyzes war-related data, said the United States is turning to economic pressure because its military campaign has failed to break the stalemate. "Iran is doing much the same thing from the other side: using the Strait of Hormuz, threats to shipping, cyberattacks and disruption to make this conflict increasingly expensive for the U.S. and its allies."

The salient question is: What happens now?

U.S. hits Iran's 'economic lifeline'

Mediation efforts by Qatar, Turkey and Egypt have stalled over the past six weeks, though Pakistan has sought to revive them in recent days. Trump has even threatened to bomb Oman, another Middle East country trying to act as a diplomatic bridge to find a way out of the war. Iran has issued a series of warnings that any vessels that violate its arrangements for transiting the Strait of Hormuz could face fines, detention or even confiscation.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Aug. 24 unveiled a fresh round of tough sanctions that he said would "sever every economic lifeline" that sustains Iran. They target any country that seeks to do business with Iran's aviation, shipping and tech sectors. Tehran vowed to retaliate and is concurrently rebuilding its military and, according to reports, may be planning on expanding the war, including escalation into Europe.

"If these sanctions bite the Iranian economy hard, I would not be surprised if the Iranians decide to escalate again by sending more drones and cruise missiles to the Gulf States. Because the Iranians are not going to sit back and let their economy get squeezed in perpetuity. They've got to respond in some way," said Daniel DePetris, a fellow at Defense Priorities, a Washington, DC, think tank that seeks a smaller global U.S. military footprint.

DePetris said he didn't think Iran would pursue a traditional kinetic war in Europe, but could attempt to retaliate through cyberattacks because "they're sort of deniable and the cost is not necessarily significant in terms of loss of life and even the economic damage is usually limited depending on the target."

The British government blamed hackers linked to Iran for a cyberattack in late August that caused a British power plant to be temporarily shut down. It came after British officials said they gave permission for the United States to launch "defensive" operations against Tehran from British military bases.

Iran war disrupts global markets

As the conflict has morphed into a stalemate with neither side able to win, it's had major implications for the international security and economic order. This has been costly for everyone involved, including global consumers.

The war caused major disruptions to global energy markets. Six months later, oil prices remain high. Inflation has surged. Economic growth has slowed.

In Iran, transportation costs have quadrupled, Memarian said. He described a sandwich shop in Tehran where prices change so rapidly that the menu is displayed near the cashier on a digital ticker, with prices updating in real time like stock market quotes.

"Inflation in Iran is very scary," Memarian said.

More broadly, the United States and Israel have found themselves isolated from allies who don't support the war, even if they want to see a change to Iran's theocratic government and destabilizing activity across the region because it supports militant groups in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. Iranian missile and drone attacks have inflicted damage on U.S. intelligence posts and surveillance hardware in the Middle East.

At least 18 U.S. military personnel have been killed, according to the Pentagon's latest data. The United Nations estimates that at least 3,375 Iranian civilians, including nearly 500 women, have been killed in the war.

Iran war unpopular in U.S.

Then there are the political costs for Trump's White House in launching and sustaining a war that poll after poll shows Americans don't want, don't fully understand and that has deeply damaged the president's popularity.

"The administration didn't explain why this war was necessary," said DePetris, who added that Trump's "original sin" on Iran occurred in 2018, during his first term, when he pulled the U.S. out of an Obama administration-era nuclear deal. The United Nations' nuclear watchdog repeatedly said the deal was limiting Iran's enriched uranium stockpile.

"The American people are looking at this and saying, 'Look, my food prices are going up, my gas prices are going up. And every one of the goals that you said we would accomplish have not been accomplished. Whether it's getting the Iranians to hand over their nuclear enrichment capabilities or opening the Strait of Hormuz,' " DePetris added.

The war has also had, from the U.S. perspective, a somewhat counterproductive impact, according to Memarian.

Critics of Iran's clerical rulers hoped initially that Iran's government would collapse amid a bombing campaign that killed Iran's most senior military and religious officials, including its supreme leader.

In fact, early on in the war, Trump floated the possibility of "regime change" in Iran before walking that back.

But when that didn't happen, and the number of Iranian civilian deaths escalated into the thousands and more and more homes and infrastructure were destroyed, many Iranians lost faith in U.S. leadership and Trump's intentions.

"Aggression and siege warfare have wrecked the image of the U.S. in a way that could have never been accomplished by the Iranian government," said Seyed Mohammad Marandi, a Tehran-based Iranian American academic and political analyst who is close to Iran's government. Marandi served as an adviser to Iran's negotiating team during the Obama-era nuclear talks and remains involved in Iran's overseas diplomatic efforts.

"Iran is winning this war," he said.

NCAA football

Continued from Page 1A

Here are the 25 Most Powerful People in College Football entering the 2026 season:

25. Pat McAfee, ESPN personality

Why he is on the list: McAfee reportedly is ESPN's highest-paid on-air talent by far, landing increased paydays while the company lays off veterans in other areas. McAfee has become a major player in getting live commitments from some of college football's top recruits and has emerged as the must-see character on "College GameDay," heir apparent to the retired Lee Corso.

24. Charlotte Sweeney, judge

Why she is on the list: A judge for the United States District Court of Colorado, Sweeney lands on this list because it was her ruling on July 31 that granted a class-wide preliminary injunction against the NCAA and that allowed graduates of the high school class of 2022 to seek a fifth year of collegiate eligibility – which is the NCAA's new model moving forward for all current and future student-athletes. Sweeney's ruling triggered aspiring NFL players to leave their respective teams' camps to seek a return – and payday – back at the collegiate game, not to mention athletes from other sports. Sweeney's decision was stayed by a three-judge panel in late August, but the battle rages on in state courtrooms as well as its still-to-be-litigated fate in Sweeney's Colorado court.

23. Nick Saban, ESPN analyst

Why he is on the list: Saban's TV work at ESPN as an expert analyst has been only part of why Saban remains amongst college athletics' most striking figures. He's also been involved in Capitol Hill discussions about the future of college athletics and even been floated as a potential "commissioner of college football."

22. Chris Del Conte, Texas athletic director

Why he is on the list: Del Conte helped steer the Longhorns into the SEC, almost permanently crippling the Big 12 in the process. Texas remains among college athletics' – especially college football's – biggest brands. Texas draws eyeballs, amasses mega-millions in revenue and has a football team expected to compete for a national title this season. That's a feat the Longhorns haven't accomplished in more than two decades.

21. Cole Gahagan, Learfield CEO

Why he is on the list: As first reported last month by USA TODAY Sports, Learfield has doled out more than $300 million in NIL payments in a massive jump from the previous reporting of $140 million in deals. Moreover, the company remains a critical partner as the multimedia rights holder to numerous high-profile college programs. If the Protect College Sports Act passes, Learfield could command an even greater place of prominence; among concessions in that bill's latest version in late July was less scrutiny on multimedia rights deals for student-athletes.

20. Kirby Smart, Georgia coach

Why he is on the list: The dean of SEC football coaches, Smart is also a two-time College Football Playoff champion. His Bulldogs remain fixtures in the CFP, but they haven't won a playoff game since the end of the 2022 season.

19. Athletes First (A1), agency

Why it is on the list: Athletes First is prominent in coaching representation, with Ohio State's Ryan Day, Texas Tech's Joey McGuire and BYU's Kalani Sitake among notable clients, but the agency lands on this list because it is widely regarded as the top firm for representing student-athletes, with several hundred clients in that space.

18. Curt Cignetti, Indiana coach

Why he is on the list: In addition to turning college football's losingest program into 2025's national champion, Cignetti has emerged as a fearless voice in college football. He touts the Big Ten's superiority, picks fights with Notre Dame and just might be the sport's most brash, free-speaking coach since Steve Spurrier.

Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Maria Cantwell, D-Washington, are cosponsors of the Protect College Sports Act. HEATHER DIEHL/GETTY IMAGES

17. Jere Morehead, Georgia president

Why he is on the list: Morehead is among the most vocal dissidents standing in the trench against the Big Ten's quest for a 24-team College Football Playoff. He's been outspoken against that move and also voiced support for an SEC breakaway from the NCAA if there isn't meaningful federal reform.

16. Mark Keenum, Mississippi State president

Why he is on the list: Keenum has served as the CFP's Chair of the Board of Managers since 2018. He's also publicly floated the potential for the SEC to forge its own unilateral path without meaningful progress on college athletics' governance at the federal level.

15. Bryan Seeley, CEO, College Sports Commission

Why he is on the list: Seeley's atop the lone oversight apparatus for Name, Image and Likeness deals across college athletics. The CSC hasn't been perfect in its first year-plus, and it needs NCAA member schools to adhere to the conditions to which they already agreed. But the CSC did score a major legal win earlier this year in court over the interpretation of multimedia rights holders as associated entities.

14. Pete Bevacqua, Notre Dame athletic director

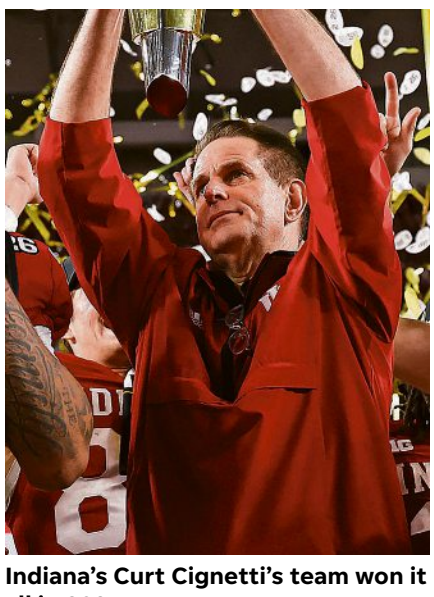
Why he is on the list: The former head of NBC Sports and also a former agent at CAA, Bevacqua blends keen business acumen from his corporate world experience with an insatiable love of Notre Dame, his alma mater, where Bevacqua once was a walk-on punter.

13. Chad Chatlos, Turnkey ZRG managing partner

Why he is on the list: There are a few search firms in the college marketplace that have carved out roles, but Chatlos' Turnkey ZRG has proved the leader in that realm and consistently handled some of college football's most notable coaching searches.

12. Rick Cordella, NBC Sports president

Why he is on the list: Cordella's got NBC Sports with three primetime Notre Dame games this upcoming season, including November dates pitting the Fighting Irish against ACC contenders Miami and SMU in games that figure to be heavy with CFP implications. The network is also



Indiana's Curt Cignetti's team won it all in 2025. PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

Donald Trump loves sports. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

continuing its partnership to broadcast Big Ten games – getting defending champ Indiana on a game this fall and slotting Minnesota-Wisconsin into primetime the day after Thanksgiving.

11. Cody Campbell, Texas Tech mega-booster, President's Council on Sports appointee

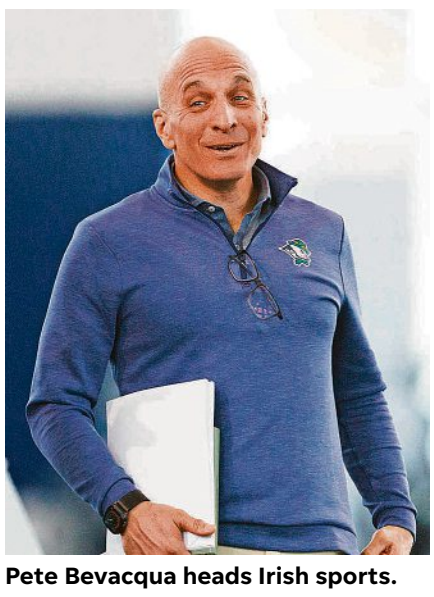
Why he is on the list: Unafraid to fund, well, just about anything his alma mater, Texas Tech, needs to fill out its football roster (as well as other Red Raiders' sports), Campbell also is active in trying to help bring some semblance of guardrails to college sports in the NCAA's current Wild West era.

10. Donald Trump, U.S. president

Why he is on the list: An avid sports fan, Trump has urged the passing of the Protect College Sports Act and likewise has formed the President's Council on Sports, Fitness and Nutrition – with that group being tasked with helping find solutions for college athletics' ongoing upheaval.

9. Jeff Kessler, attorney

Why he is on the list: In a time when headlines surrounding college athletics seemingly change by the hour, two names were constants across the past six months: ex-Texas Tech quarterback Brendan Sorsby, and his high-profile attorney, Jeffrey Kessler. It was Kessler's legal wrangling that nearly had the admitted NCAA gambler Sorsby eligible to play this season in college football. Kessler also vowed a fight against the NFL on Sorsby's behalf. He's at the epicenter of all things House Settlement and beyond in collegiate athletics' intersection with the legal system.



Pete Bevacqua heads Irish sports. MICHAEL CLUBB/USA TODAY NETWORK

8. Brett Yormark, Big 12 commissioner

Why he is on the list: An innovator, Yormark has navigated college athletics' uncertainty to keep afloat the Big 12 as a Power conference league – even if it's well behind the Big Ten and SEC. He's weathered the Brendan Sorsby-Texas Tech gambling storm and also worked doggedly on Capitol Hill in an effort to try to help push forward the Protect College Sports Act.

7. Jim Phillips, ACC commissioner

Why he is on the list: Like the Big 12, Phillips' ACC is well behind the Big Ten and SEC – but still a force. Especially after having Miami play for the CFP title last season. The lawsuits from disgruntled members have, for now, died down, and the ACC could get some federal protection against future membership raids if the Protect College Sports Act can get wedged into law.

6. Jimmy Sexton, CAA's head of college coaches representation

Why he is on the list: A year after having the most coaches of teams selected for the CFP, Sexton reps the coaches of three of the nation's top four teams in the US LBM Coaches Poll: Oregon's Dan Lanning, Georgia's Smart and Texas' Steve Sarkisian; he's the tip of the CAA spear for representation for six head coaches in the poll's top 11 teams. Sexton of late has flexed his muscles as an undeniable force in college baseball, which has seen record growth in coaching salaries, but he's unequaled in college football.

5. Ted Cruz/Maria Cantwell, U.S. senators, cosponsors of Protect College Sports Act

Why they're on the list: While the Protect College Sports Act has added some additional cosponsors and faces challenges to get to the desk of President Donald Trump, Cruz and Cantwell have brokered bipartisan support for a bill expected to receive a floor vote next month in the Senate. While not perfect for anyone involved, the Protect College Sports Act remains the only current option for meaningful oversight, reform – and, most importantly, the preservation of college athletics in some semblance of its current existence.

4. Eric Shanks, Fox Sports CEO/executive producer

Why he is on the list: Quite simply, Shanks is empowering his network to take on ESPN head-to-head in the college football space. Fox's Big Noon Kickoff has been a strong add for the network, and Shanks stared down detractors who didn't want to see Barstool Sports founder Dave Portnoy included in coverage – and included Portnoy anyway.

3. Greg Sankey, SEC commissioner

Why he is on the list: Sankey's in a bit of denial about his conference somehow still being competitively superior on the football field to the Big Ten, which owns three-straight national titles, but his teams drive the marketplace. For what it's worth, the SEC owns the most preseason-ranked teams as well, with nine apiece in both the US LBM Coaches Poll and AP Top 25.

2. Burke Magnus, ESPN president of content

Why he is on the list: Magnus has been key in empowering another member on this list – ESPN talent Pat McAfee – as a central component of the network's long-running, college football trendsetter GameDay. That program remains the barometer for all college pre- and post-game shows.

1. Tony Petitti, Big Ten commissioner

Why he is on the list: By any rational metric across the past three seasons, Petitti's conference reigns supreme: Three College Football Playoff titles from three teams and a record $1.37 billion being distributed to the conference's 18 members. Plus, he's been the fly in the ointment regarding CFP expansion, digging his heels in on a 24-team tournament.

Our panel of experts from the USA TODAY Network who decided on this ranking included national college football writers Matt Hayes, Blake Toppmeyer and John Brice, USA TODAY sports writers Paul Myerberg, Brent Schrotenboer and Eddie Timanus, Adam Cole (Auburn, Montgomery Advertiser) and USA TODAY Sports deputy college sports editor Erick Smith.

Week in review

Recapping the most important and talked about news this week from around the world – ICYMI

NEWS

Meta settles suit for $17 billion

Tech giant Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, will pay up to $16.68 billion to settle claims that the company designed its social media platforms to addict young users. The lawsuit brought by dozens of states also accused Meta of misleading consumers and improperly collecting kids' personal data. The company denied wrongdoing but agreed to make changes, including daily screen limits and nighttime blocks. The settlement, reached in federal court in California, averts a major test of the liability of social media companies, but thousands of lawsuits over claims of harm to kids are still pending.

Measles raising new alarms

An outbreak of measles is deepening the concerns among health authorities as Pennsylvania reported two deaths from the disease, the first measles deaths in the United States this year. Both patients were unvaccinated, Pennsylvania's health department said. Measles cases in the United States are at their highest since the highly contagious disease was eliminated from the country nearly three decades ago, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 93% of cases have been in unvaccinated people, and nearly 70% of cases have been in people ages 19 and younger.

MONEY

Target pulls dubious costume

Retail giant Target has landed in hot water – not for the first time – after one of its seasonal Halloween costumes brought complaints on social media that the garb resembled the Blackface characters of minstrel shows of the 1800s. The company said it has pulled the costume, sold as the Kids' Glows Under Blacklight Circus Clown. "As a company, we know we got this wrong, and we are deeply sorry," the retailer said in a statement. Target has absorbed a series of embarrassments in recent years, including a controversy over its Pride Collection in 2023 and its retreat from diversity, equity and inclusion policies in 2024.

IMAGE OF THE WEEK

Warm, fuzzy therapy

Aide Sherry Hebert is in tears as Tony Shirah, of Mini Mitten Acres farm in Davison, Michigan, leads Pippa the micro-mini Highland cow to meet Connie Linton, 72, at a rehab center.

ERIC SEALS/ USA TODAY NETWORK

LIFE

Nation mourns loss of Dolly Parton

Country music lost an icon and the nation lost one of its most beloved personalities with the death of Dolly Parton. She was 80 and had been fighting cancer. Her 60-year career spanned classics like "Jolene," "I Will Always Love You" and "9 to 5," 49 studio albums and 25 No. 1 hits. She was also an astute businesswoman and poured millions of dollars into philanthropy. Of her icon status, she told USA TODAY in 2023: "I've been around for so long. I'm like a favorite aunt, or a favorite godmother or a favorite sister. ... I just hope I never let anybody down."

SPORTS

Washington, DC, has a need for speed

Washington, DC, is used to noise – notably from the halls of Congress. But the din this time was the scream of high-performance engines on the streets of the capital for the Freedom 250 Grand Prix, the city's first motorsport event. With President Donald Trump waving the green flag to start the race, 25 drivers circled a 147-lap course with the Washington Monument, the Capitol and iconic museums and memorials as a backdrop. Kyle Kirkwood took the trophy. "This is a big moment," he said. "It's fitting that an American won, right?"

– Compiled by Robert Abitbol

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

MEMO TO: Governor Mike DeWine
FROM: Donn & Kristin Sinclair (803)329-0609
Ohio Natives & SC Residents

foundation Sinclair

SUBJECT: Fire Hazards and Taxes Wasted
DATE: August 18, 2026

Recently Sinclair Foundation paid to have eleven additional blighted houses inspected by a licensed home inspector. Inspection report quotes: ***"It is a health, safety and fire issue waiting to happen." "The current setting is very much a health, safety and fire risk for all of the surroundings."*** The Village of BellAire has condemned all eleven blighted houses. ***Inspection Reports and more, at bottom of home page on BellAire1.com***

These eleven and other nearby blighted houses now pose a fire hazard risk to our Rose Hill Neighborhood; ***in which Sinclair Foundation, a South Carolina 501(c)(3) non-profit has invested over $100,000 Out-of-State Capital.*** We have acquired 14 blighted properties and demolishing 6 blighted houses. Now it is confirmed, our Ohio revitalization efforts are threatened by fire and safety risks from nearby blighted houses.

Months ago Sinclair Foundation offered a private/public partnership to the Belmont County land bank and commissioners; which would remove these eleven and even more fire hazards. Our offer is: if the BC land bank will acquire these eleven targeted blighted house properties, clear the deed, test for and abate any environmental hazards, ***then Sinclair Foundation will provide a GIFT up to $200,000 in demolition services from a licensed/permitted and insured contractor - selected by and paid by Sinclair Foundation.*** This GIFT; should save Ohio Taxpayers at least $200,000.

To insure that the properties are placed back in productive use, Sinclair Foundation will retain a lien on each property: for the cost of the inspection, legal costs, and demolition services. Said lien may not be removed without Sinclair Foundation written authorization. In addition, for a period of up to three years, Sinclair Foundation will partner thirds with BC land bank and the Village of BellAire to maintain the properties.

We ask your office to immediately intercede, explain to the BC land bank board and BC commissioners, that a GIFT to the county need not go through the county bidding process. Then we can move forward and eliminate these fire hazards; before someone(s) gets hurt or worse. Plus, save Ohio Taxpayers $200,000 !!!

Sinclair Foundation - P.O. Box 4978 - Rock Hill, SC 29732
Donn@RHSC.com (803)329-0609

CDB44555689

Parents behind wristband protest handed legal win

Didn't want transgender player in NH soccer game

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

An appeals court sided with the parents of New Hampshire students who accused school officials of banning them from events after they wore wristbands to protest a transgender player's participation in a girls soccer game in 2024, finding the display "fell short of harassment and disruption."

A district court earlier had denied the parents' request for a preliminary injunction, which would have prohibited Bow High School, just south of Concord, New Hampshire, from banning the parents from school property and events while litigation continued. The First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said in its opinion Aug. 26 that the parents had a "reasonable likelihood" of proving that the school's actions were based on unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination, sending the case back to the district court for further proceedings.

Del Kolde, a senior attorney at the Institute for Free Speech, which is representing the students' family members, said in the organization's news release Aug. 26 that the ruling "reaffirms parents have a right to silently express their views on controversial issues" regardless of whether school officials disagree.

"If school officials allow expression supporting one side of a political debate, they cannot ban silent, peaceful expression on the other side," Kolde said. "Our clients simply stood up for their First Amendment rights."

Kyle Fellers, one of the parents involved in the lawsuit, called the decision "a victory not just for our family but for every parent who believes they have the right to peacefully express their views at a public event."

USA TODAY reached out to Bow School District for comment.

Court: Wristbands were 'passive, silent gesture of protest'

Transgender students Parker Tirrell and Iris Turmelle, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire, sued state and district officials in August 2024 over a state law enacted earlier in the year that barred schools from allowing athletes to play on teams that don't align with their biological sex. A district court granted a preliminary injunction allowing Tirrell and Turmelle to play or try out for girls sports teams while the case proceeded.

Ahead of a soccer game in September 2024 in which Tirrell was scheduled to play for the opposing team, Fellers – along with Anthony Foote and Nicole Foote, parents of another player – "expressed their opposition" to transgender athletes joining in girls sports, the court's opinion said. The parents sought support as some reached out to school officials and others posted on social media to urge people to attend the game in support of the Bow High School players as they "face a team that includes a biological male on the roster."

Anthony Foote handed out wristbands with "XX," a reference to female sex chromosomes, to a handful of people during the game, the opinion said. Michael Desilets, Bow High School's athletic director, soon asked Anthony Foote to remove the wristband, and he complied after initially refusing. Fellers then refused to do the same, prompting Desilets to consult with Principal Matt Fisk and Bow Police Lt. Philip Lamy.

Lamy said Fellers "must remove the wristband or leave the game," and Fellers complied, the court said. Fellers' father-in-law, Eldon Rash, then put the wristband on. Referee Steve Rosetti stopped the game shortly after and said "play would not resume" until Rash removed it, according to the court.

Bow School District soon issued no-trespass orders that banned Fellers and Anthony Foote from entering district property or attending sporting or other extracurricular events. Fellers, Anthony and Nicole Foote and Rash collectively sued the district, as well as individuals representing the school, the police department, and the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association later that month.

USA TODAY reached out to the officials involved for comment.

The U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire denied their motion for a preliminary injunction in 2025, finding that the school district's rules and regulations were "reasonable, viewpoint neutral and consistent with the schools' pedagogical goals." The school, according to the court, reasonably believed the protest "targeted a specific transgender student" and "demeaned a core immutable characteristic of their personal identity."

The appeals court disagreed in its Aug. 26 opinion, describing the wristbands as a "passive, silent gesture of protest."

"The appellants did not stage any pregame demonstrations; did not march, shout, chant or otherwise disrupt the game; and did not confront Tirrell or any other player," the court said, adding that there was no evidence any player ever saw the wristbands.

The district court was ordered to reconsider the case in light of the appeals court's findings.

USA TODAY's coverage of First Amendment issues is funded through a collaboration between the Freedom Forum and Journalism Funding Partners. Funders do not provide editorial input.

Lisa Cook again denies wrongdoing in fight against removal from Fed

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook has survived one attempt by President Donald Trump to fire her.
ANN SAPHIR/REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Lisa Cook, a member of the Federal Reserve board of governors, repeated her denial of mortgage fraud in her battle against being fired by President Donald Trump.

The Supreme Court rebuffed Trump's initial attempt to fire Cook for not yet justifying why he wanted to remove her. Dan Scavino, a White House deputy chief of staff, wrote a fresh letter Aug. 5 seeking to dismiss her, and Cook again called the allegations against her "unfounded and untrue."

"For the second time in a year, we have explained why there is no legal basis for President Trump to remove Governor Cook for cause," Cook's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, said in a statement. "These attacks on Governor Cook are not about real estate paperwork; they are an attempt by President Trump to force the Federal Reserve to bend to his will."

The dispute over Trump's attempt to remove Cook is part of a broader fight over the president's ability to hire or fire anyone in the executive branch. The Supreme Court overturned a 90-year precedent in June so that he could remove members of other independent agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission.

But in another decision in June, the justices blocked Trump's initial attempt to remove Cook by ruling he could remove her only "for good reason."

Chief Justice John Roberts said Cook was entitled, at a minimum, to "some explanation of the evidence at issue, some avenue for a response, and a deadline by which a response would be due."

Trump's action against Cook came after William Pulte, who was then director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, accused her of mortgage fraud in August 2025 for allegedly calling two of her homes her primary residence so she could get a more favorable interest rate.

Lowell called the mistake "inadvertent" rather than fraud and said members of Trump's Cabinet "did the same thing."

"Governor Cook's apparent mistake on a form provided to her by her lender, which was aware of her other residences, was unintentional, not criminal, and occurred in her private capacity before she took office," Lowell wrote in the formal reply to the White House.

Tight races in Iowa for Senate, governor show Trump's woes

Democratic hopes rise in state led by GOP

Susan Page
USA TODAY

Even in Iowa, Republican candidates for the Senate and governorship are now locked in tight races, a new Suffolk University poll finds – thanks, in part, to dissatisfaction with Donald Trump in a state he carried in three presidential elections.

The margin-of-error results in the Hawkeye State are stoking Democratic hopes of scoring midterm victories in unexpected places.

In the governor's race, Democratic state Auditor Rob Sand is leading Republican businessman Zach Lahn by 4 percentage points, 48%-44%.

In the Senate race, Republican congresswoman Ashley Hinson is leading Democratic state representative Josh Turek by 4 points, 45%-41%.

"Keep in mind this is a state that Donald Trump won by more than 13 points in 2024," said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center in Boston. No Democrat has been elected governor of Iowa in 20 years, and none has been elected to the Senate in 18.

The poll of 500 likely voters, taken Aug. 20-23 by landline and cell phone, has an error margin of plus or minus 4.4 points.

Asked their "primary motivation" for voting in the midterm election, 30% said it was to "express dissatisfaction with the current national political climate." That's more than the number who cited supporting a specific candidate's vision (11%) and weighing in on local ballot issues (16%), combined. Four in 10 said they were voting to "fulfill my civic duty."

In the governor's race, Sand has edged ahead thanks to near-solid support among Democrats, disproportionate support among independents (53%-34%) and even 9% support from Republicans. In contrast, Lahn received no Democratic support.

In the Senate race, Turek is supported by nearly all Democrats and leads narrowly among independents, 39%-35%, plus 5% of Republicans. Hinson was backed by a single Democratic respondent.

When the handful of Trump voters in 2024 who aren't supporting Hinson were asked why, the most common response was that Republicans had "gotten off track" and "didn't deliver."

Among the most enthusiastic voters, those very likely to vote, Turek and Hinson are tied, 45%-45%.

The race is being closely watched as an unexpected prospect to help Democrats regain control of the Senate. That would require holding all the Democratic-held seats on the ballot in November and flipping four Republican-held seats. Iowa hasn't been in the top tier of Democratic targets, but a competitive race here could help offset a loss elsewhere.

Sen. Joni Ernst isn't running for reelection. Nor is Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Iowa is still, to be clear, a ruby-red state. Registered Republicans outnumber Democrats by 200,000, and Republicans now hold all six seats in Congress, both chambers of the state legislature and every statewide elected office save one.

But the state's agricultural economy has been hit hard by trade wars and the rising cost of gas and fertilizer, and national issues over the affordability of groceries, housing and health care resonate here, as well.

While Trump swamped Democrat presidential nominee Kamala Harris in Iowa in 2024, his favorable-unfavorable rating is now underwater by a tick, at 48%-49%.

Among Republicans, 10% now give him an unfavorable rating, and among independents, 51%- 42% have an unfavorable view.

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OPINION

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Dolly helped me embrace my Southern roots

Sara Pequeño
USA TODAY

A young resident of Asheville, North Carolina, on Aug. 25 leaves her copy of "Lily's Cat Mask," the last book she received from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, beneath a mural of the icon by artist Gus Cutty. CASEY BLAKE/USA TODAY

The world just got a little less glittery.

On Aug. 25, the family of Dolly Parton announced that the singer, philanthropist and all-around icon had died at 80 years old after a series of recent health concerns. In a video published to Parton's social media accounts, Bryan Seaver, her nephew and head of security, said the country music legend "made and changed history," noting that she was finally reunited with her late husband, Carl Dean.

"Dolly called me and said she wants to rest in a beautiful bed of plush cotton because after a life wearing heavy rhinestones, she finally deserves to be comfortable and have some rest," Seaver said.

Parton, a 5-foot force of nature from Locust Ridge, Tennessee, was someone who transcended political, generational and regional divides.

Her impact on Southern culture, and American culture more broadly, is undeniable. Her ability to tell stories through her lyricism made her one of the sharpest songwriters of the past century. Her acting credits in "9 to 5" and "Steel Magnolias" showcased her quick wit and emotional depth. Her business and philanthropic endeavors made it clear she was both smart and sincere. She was able to break off from "The Porter Wagoner Show" in 1974 and stake her claim in a music scene dominated by men, never losing her charm or her big blond hair.

Dolly Parton was one of our proudest cultural exports

She was one of one. Her life story should be taught in schools, and her impact globally can't be overstated.

But for those of us who grew up in Appalachia, or in the South in general, Parton was one of our proudest cultural exports. My Instagram feed was overflowing with images of the country music legend from the moment she died, mainly from other LGBTQ+ people for whom Parton was more than a singer.

I grew up in the shadow of the Blue Ridge, on the North Carolina side of the mountains where Parton was raised in. Our upbringings were not similar – Parton often spoke of growing up in a small cabin with 11 siblings, an experience I did not have.

Yet Parton was a unifying figure – no matter your politics, we could all agree on her.

As a child, I was never proud of being from the South, especially the rural South. I was an outspoken bisexual girl with a Spanish last name. It was a place I wanted to escape, so that I could be my true self.

When I went to college, I felt defined by where I was from – not a city kid, but a mountain kid. It was then that I started missing where I was from.

The first drag show I ever attended was for Parton's birthday, at an LGBTQ+ bar called The Pinhook in Durham, North Carolina, my senior year of college. It was my first time interacting with a community that now feels like home. Parton was well-known for her support of the LGBTQ+ community. In 2016, when my home state passed an anti-trans bathroom bill, Parton went on CNN to speak against it.

"I think everybody should be treated with respect," she said at the time. "I hope that everybody gets a chance to be who and what they are."

As I have grown more familiar with Parton's discography, I found solace in her love, her humor and her pain. I went to Dollywood after graduation and found myself charmed by the artisanal goods and butterflies everywhere.

Parton and I spoke the same language, a language only people from Appalachia can understand. It is through Parton that I was able to connect with my Southernness, my ruralness, in a way that didn't feel like it denied part of who I was.

When I try to imagine heaven, I imagine the Appalachian Mountains. I imagine a soft wind on the pine trees, a patch of wildflowers in a craggy garden untouched by human hands, a robin's song breaking through the open sky, the sun spots in the graveyard where we buried my grandmother.

I hope her kindness carries on through her fans

Parton described similar feelings of peace in the 1973 single "My Tennessee Mountain Home": "In my Tennessee mountain home/Life is as peaceful as a baby's sigh."

But I also know that Appalachia is not a dreamy retreat for all who live there. It is harsh, and the persistence of the undead Confederacy and Make America Great Again flags that fly in the hollows where I grew up made it difficult to feel like it was a permanent home.

It's hard when a place that feels like it has grown into your bones does not accept you, or makes you feel different in any way.

Parton was an antidote for that.

She was a universally beloved figure who left behind a legacy as kind as it was vast. While yes, her story is also defined by her willingness to sidestep important political conversations at times, she was outspoken when it counted – like when she helped fund the COVID-19 vaccine and took a video of herself receiving the shot. She was outspoken about literacy rates and helped provide children with books through the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. She embodied Southern values at their best, prioritizing love and acceptance over divisive rhetoric.

Parton made me feel proud to be from Appalachia. I hope her fans continue to embody the values of love and kindness that she held dear.

You can follow USA TODAY columnist Sara Pequeño on the Bluesky platform: @sarapequeno.bsky.social

I deserve to die with dignity. I have to leave the U.S. to do it.

Rusty Martin
Opinion contributor

Editor's note: Rusty Martin died Aug. 18 by taking medication prescribed by a doctor to end his life in Switzerland.

The day I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, I decided I would not let the disease slowly kill me. Instead, I would choose the day of my death.

I will not let Alzheimer's completely take my mind. Or warehouse me in a nursing home. Or set me in conflict with my wife or other loved ones.

I'm going to Switzerland instead. Several organizations there help people end their lives, legally, peacefully.

My Alzheimer's journey will end this month. With my wife and my two sons, I will travel to a suburb of Zurich to die.

Dying is not something I "want" to do. I wish I could die at home at the time of my choosing. My state will not let me.

I'm 66 years old, retired and having a wonderful time. I have an amazing wife, family and friends. I enjoy travel and being outdoors.

Kay Meyer, my wife of 28 years, is the primary reason my life is so good. She does almost everything. She handles the money, the doctor visits, makes sure I take my medicine, manages my daily schedule and so much more.

I didn't used to be like this.

I was born and raised on a farm in northwest Iowa and have lived in the state most of my life. My last job was at the Iowa statehouse. For 24 years, I was the communications director for Democratic senators.

To help them communicate with their constituents, I wrote news releases, recorded audio and video clips, built mailing lists, learned new technologies and managed an extensive library of digital documents.

I'm especially proud of and thankful for the dozens of interns I recruited, trained and managed.

I was miserable during my last couple of years in the legislature. The systems I had built were falling apart. I was missing meetings and making lots of mistakes. I responded by doubling down and trying harder. It didn't work.

The people I worked with knew I was struggling. So did I. I saw my doctor. I saw counselors. I took antidepressants. I made lots of to-do lists. Things just kept getting worse.

Finally, I gave up and retired.

I found the reason for my struggles once I was referred to Dr. Yogi Shah, medical director of the Broadlawns Memory Center in Des Moines. Dr. Shah ordered the test that discovered that I had early-onset Alzheimer's, a progressive, fatal disease that destroys your brain and body.

Devastating Alzheimer's diagnosis also finally brought me relief

There is no cure. My treatment options are limited. I'm on two Alzheimer's-specific medications. I've declined the new blood platelet treatments, which help many people. But due to my own genetic predisposition, they increase risks for me.

My diagnosis was devastating news. I went to my home office, shut the door, sat down and shed a few tears.

Then something unexpected happened. Despite learning I had a fatal, incurable disease, I felt a wave of relief.

Finally, I knew why life had gotten so difficult, why I couldn't sleep, the cause of all this anxiety.

And it was not my fault.

I'm lucky that I've always enjoyed being physically active, because that's one way to temporarily clear my Alzheimer's-related brain fog. Twice a day, I run, bike or lift weights intensely to get my heart rate up.

Rusty Martin and his wife, Kay Meyer, at their home in Des Moines in July. TRAVIS LACOSS/THE REGISTER

I can't keep this up forever. I fear the flu, injury and anything else that could keep me from exercising.

In June, I fell off my mountain bike and smacked my leg. I was back on the bike the next day, but would I get up the next time?

Working on my final exit now takes up much of my "quality" time. None of this is cheap or easy. When I travel to Switzerland, Dignitas – an organization that helps terminally ill people die – will require that I be examined by two doctors to ensure that I still have the capacity to make this decision.

That's why I need to go sooner than I would prefer.

Despite all the hassles, I take great comfort in knowing how my life will end. Other people with Alzheimer's make different choices. That's their choice, and I should have mine.

Why am I forced to travel to a foreign country, far away from my family and friends, to exercise this right? I would rather stick around longer and take physician-prescribed medication to end my life in Iowa. Surely we can do better.

More states, including Illinois, are giving their residents more end-of-life autonomy. Even those laws, however, require a doctor to declare that the person seeking to end their life has six months or less to live.

That requirement fails Alzheimer's patients. My body could live on for years after my mind is gone.

In Canada, competent individuals with Alzheimer's can get assistance in dying. With adequate safeguards, such laws prevent needless suffering for patients and their families.

More states should allow end-of-life autonomy

We Iowans are on our own. The Iowa Legislature has repeatedly rejected, with little debate, death with dignity legislation. Republicans talk a good game about personal freedom, but they have done nothing to advance this important topic. No bills, no committee meetings, nothing.

In early August, more than 30 members of my large family – including my six siblings – gathered at our annual reunion at the Root River Valley in Minnesota. I told them that, even if I seem healthy, good times like these will soon vanish from my memory. They were all understanding and supportive.

Choosing to end my life in this way is a rational, reasonable response to a terrible disease – one that all Iowans should have the right to make.

If you agree, let your legislator know.

Rusty Martin of Des Moines was a retired communications professional and educator. This column originally appeared in the Des Moines Register.

USA TODAY

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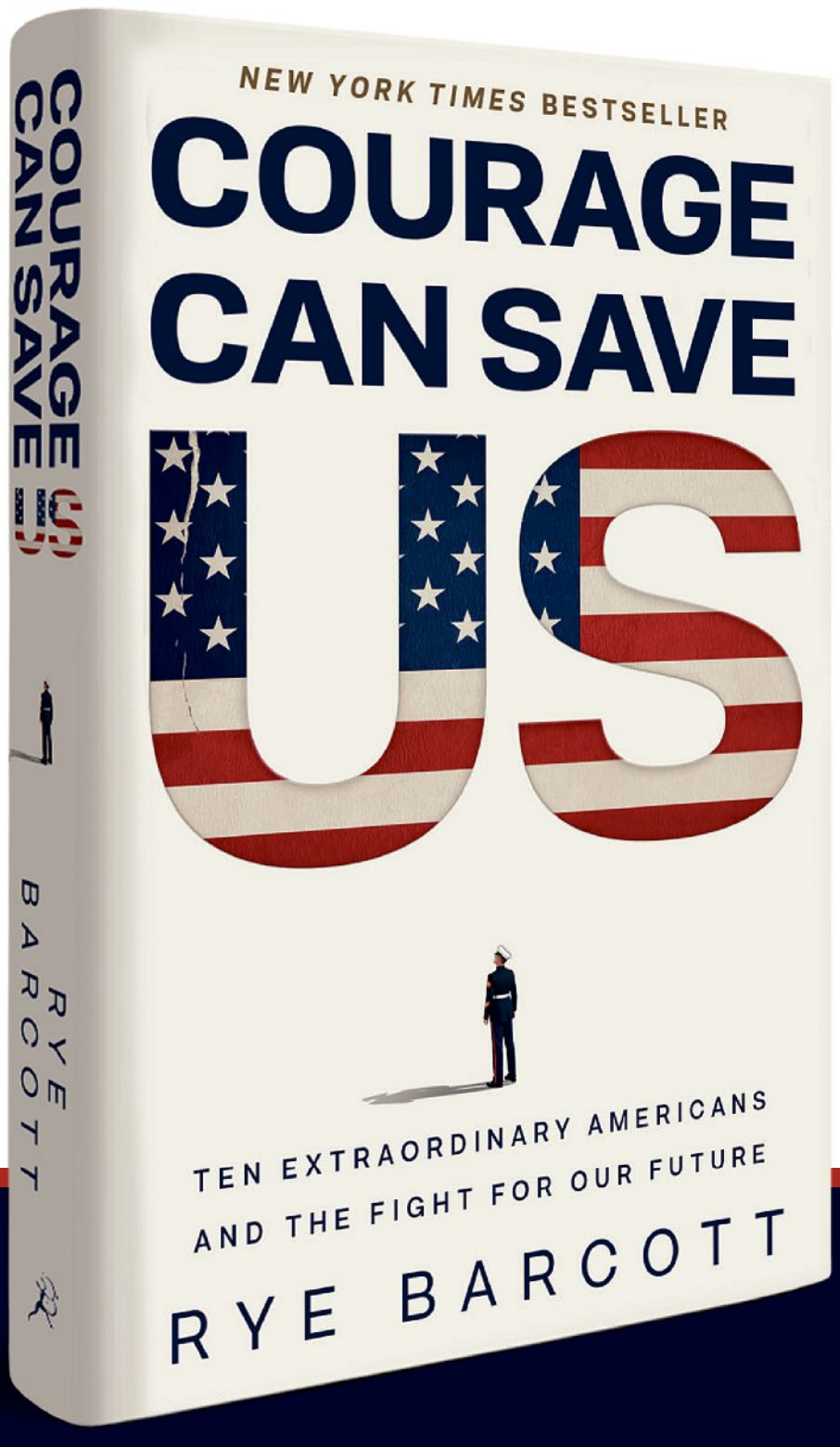

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Fast & Furious roller coaster ride puts you in driver's seat

Universal Studios Hollywood is still tinkering under the hood, though. **Page 5B**

LIFELINE

DIA DIPASUPIL/GETTY IMAGES

MAKING WAVES
BUSY PHILIPPS

Busy Philipps is thankful to be alive after doctors discovered a tumor in her brain earlier this year. The "Freaks and Geeks" and "Cougar Town" star, 47, revealed in an exclusive Aug. 26 interview with People magazine she underwent a scan in February that revealed a lesion on her brain. After a follow-up MRI was reviewed by a neurologist at NYU Langone, Philipps, who was not experiencing obvious symptoms, learned the mass was a tumor that needed to be removed. She subsequently underwent two surgeries. "I'm grateful that I'm alive," Philipps told People, also describing the ordeal as "the weirdest six months of my life."

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Priestley

Poet **Rita Dove** turns 74. Actor **Luis Guzmán**, 70. Artist **Ai Weiwei**, 69. Actor **Daniel Stern**, 69. Actor **Jennifer Coolidge**, 65. Director **David Fincher**, 64. Singer **Shania Twain**, 61. Actor-musician **Jack Black**, 57. Actor **Jason Priestley**, 57. Business executive **Sheryl Sandberg**, 57. Singer **LeAnn Rimes**, 44. Singer-songwriter **Florence Welch**, 40. Actor **Quvenzhané Wallis**, 23.
– USA TODAY Network

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). Reaching your breaking point? Today's lunar eclipse in Pisces asks you to take a pause for the cause.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Upgraded values may shake up your future plans or social life. What needs to shift for your heart to realign?

Gemini (May 21-June 21). A catalyst comes to dismantle your career and home life during the Pisces lunar eclipse.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). What would happen if you let go of that belief? The Pisces lunar eclipse arrives to upgrade your emotional philosophies.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Trust and money are under an emotional spotlight. Are unexpected developments having you think on your feet?

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Relationships reach an undeniable turning point! Can this connection roll with an unforeseen professional development?

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). What habit are you ready to move on from? Listen to your body during the Pisces lunar eclipse.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A creative or romantic story reaches its peak! Can you enjoy the moment without managing people's expectations?

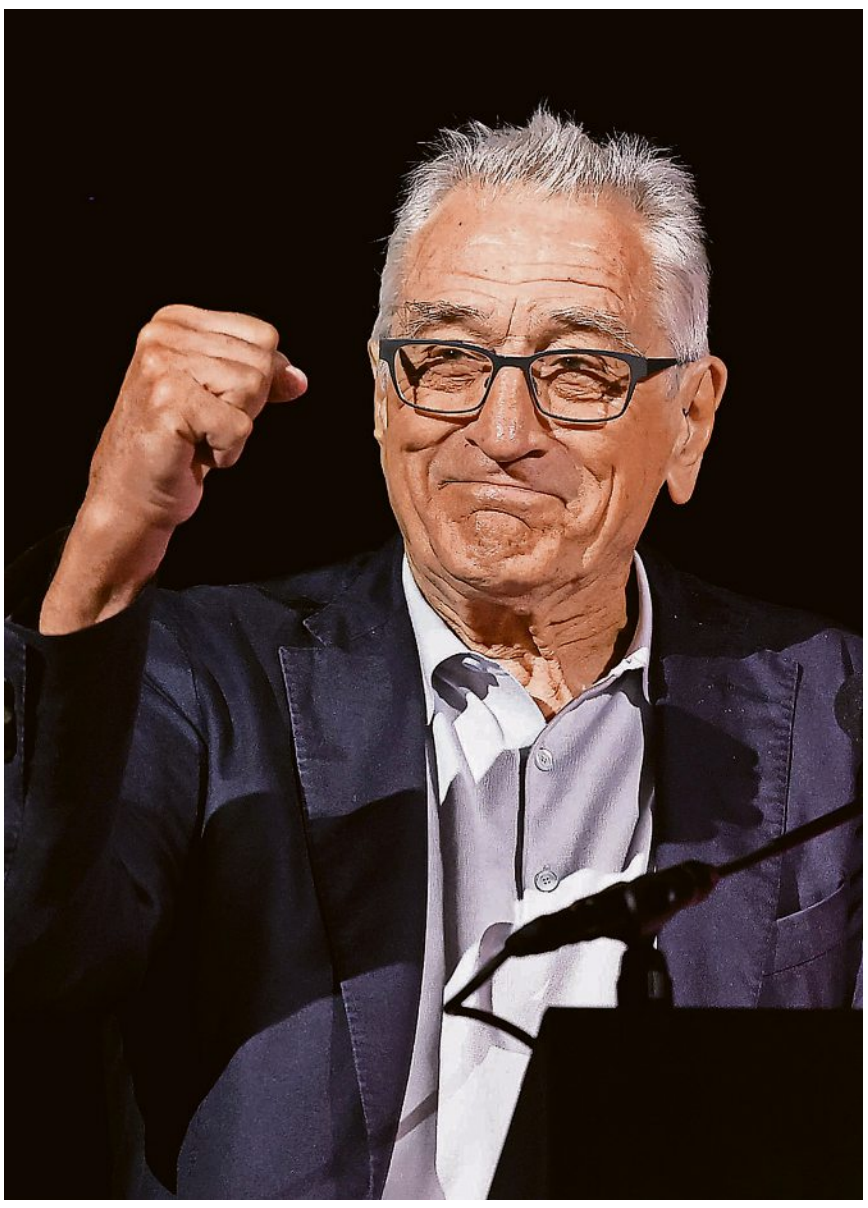
Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). An ongoing story reaches its culmination. Is your home life being rearranged by unexpected events in your career?

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). A conversation changes your view of what's possible. Can you be open to making adjustments?

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A sudden heart's desire may tempt you to spend. Check the price tag before you go all in.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Are your needs nonnegotiable? Today's Pisces lunar eclipse demands that you share what's been shifting inside of you.

MOVIES



Robert De Niro, speaking at the Tribeca Festival in New York on June 3, has a lot on his plate. JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES

De Niro speaks out, from 'Whisper' to a shout

Patrick Ryan USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Robert De Niro is the king of the crime thriller. • The two-time Oscar-winning legend has starred in some of the most enduring movies of the past 50 or so years, from gritty New York dramas "Mean Streets" and "Taxi Driver" to masterful Mob epics "Goodfellas," "Casino" and "The Godfather Part II." • Now, the "Heat" actor is back in action with Netflix's "The Whisper Man" (streaming Aug. 28), a spine-chilling adaptation of Alex North's 2019 mystery novel. Directed by James Ashcroft, the movie follows a recently widowed crime writer named Tom Kennedy (Adam Scott), whose young son Jake (Acston Luca Porto) is abducted. Tom calls on his estranged father, Pete (De Niro), a retired police detective, for help, and they soon uncover an eerie link to a convicted serial killer known as the Whisper Man.

The film, which also stars Michelle Monaghan and Michael Keaton, taps into primal fears of the unknown and danger lurking in our own backyards.

The randomness of such crimes is "the thing that's so scary, especially today," says De Niro, seated with USA TODAY at a Central Park hotel on a recent afternoon. "I mean, when I was a kid, you were always worried about the same things. But it seemed to be less intense in the '40s and early '50s."

De Niro, 83, has a full plate with the upcoming comedy sequel "Focker-in-Law" (in theaters Nov. 25), costarring Ariana Grande, whom he

See DE NIRO, Page 4B

Pete (De Niro), Tom (Adam Scott) and Amanda (Michelle Monaghan) work to find Tom's 8-year-old son in "The Whisper Man."
PROVIDED BY DAVID LEE/NETFLIX

MUSIC NEWS & VIEWS

Parton's cultural impact will live on

Melissa Ruggieri
USA TODAY

Dolly Parton took an adage about perseverance and made it her own.

"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain," she said throughout her career, most recently in a social media post in May.

Parton endured the seesaw of rainbows and rain throughout 80 years of an extraordinary life that ended Aug. 25.

Small-town daughter of a farmer and homemaker who cared for a dozen children in a cabin without electricity.

Awards-and-rhinestone-laden superstar with an arsenal of hit records, a string of memorable movie performances, her own theme park and business empire, and philanthropic passions.

Parton was the standard-bearer of a dissipating breed of superstar. Whether it was her music – honest to its core – her sunny disposition, candid observations or sheer adorability, Parton escaped labels and defied political partisanship.

It doesn't take much for people to disagree and share those opinions vociferously. But even if you didn't have an appetite for Parton's music or appreciate her brand of sassy yee-haw chic, how often did you hear anyone disparage Dolly Rebecca Parton?

Dolly Parton's legacy goes beyond music. PROVIDED BY DOLLY PARTON ESTATE

She could charm Johnny Carson and David Letterman alike. Break though on "The Porter Wagoner" show in the '60s and '70s and quietly work as a producer on "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" in the '90s and '00s.

Be a spiritual person who sings about Christian faith and support the LGBTQ+ community with her approval of same-sex marriage.

Donate $1 million to COVID-19 vaccine research during the pandemic and still somehow manage in death to broker common ground between President Donald Trump and former President Barack Obama, both of whom shared messages of sympathy upon news of Parton's death. Trump also ordered flags to fly at half-staff through sunset Sept. 1 in Parton's honor.

Parton maintained her privacy

There were so many things to admire about Parton. Her philanthropy through her Dollywood Foundation and Imagination Library. Her unapologetic style and sense of self. Her peerless ability to weave a story with keen observational skills and a guitar. Her on-screen magnetism in films that never required her to play more than a modified version of herself, whether it was warmth or comedy, because she oozed both.

But for as much as Parton shared of herself with the public, she kept her private life padlocked. Her nearly 60-year marriage to Carl Dean, who died in March 2025, was notable for how much we *didn't* know about the couple. Photos of the twosome were almost nonexistent. When asked about Dean in interviews, Parton usually

See PARTON, Page 4B

DOLLY PARTON 1946-2026 NEWS & VIEWS

Dolly Parton, the beloved, groundbreaking country music singer, actor and philanthropist, died Aug. 25 at 80 after a battle with cancer. PHOTOS BY JOE RUDIS, JIMMY ELLIS, SHELLEY MAYS AND CALLIE SHELL VIA THE TENNESSEAN; MICHAEL PATRICK VIA NEWS SENTINEL. ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN NGUYEN/USA TODAY

Her songs already are timeless

Ed Masley Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

There are celebrity deaths that just hit harder. This is one of those. • It wasn't rare to see her celebrated in her lifetime as the Queen of Country. But Dolly Parton was so much more than that, an American treasure who spoke to countless generations with an artistry that went beyond the boundaries of a single genre and a personality as sparkling as her rhinestone-studded outfits. • She was cut from a singular cloth with an artistic vision as distinctive as that voice of hers, an instrument of pure emotion that could scarcely be more instantly identifiable as Dolly Parton. • As the music world mourns the loss of an undisputed icon, here are 10 classic recordings that speak to her enduring genius, most of which she wrote, from early hits that went on to be standards ("I Will Always Love You" and "Jolene") to "Backwoods Barbie," a late-career triumph that takes her detractors to task while offsetting her fiery independent streak with self-effacing charm and wit in classic Dolly Parton fashion.

10. 'Islands in the Stream' (1983)

Does it feel a little awkward to begin our countdown with a song the Bee Gees wrote with either Marvin Gaye or Diana Ross in mind (depending on which Bee Gee you believe)? Of course it does. But this was one of Parton's most successful pop hits for a reason, a duet with Kenny Rogers that gave them both their second No. 1 appearance on the Billboard Hot 100. His was "Lady." Hers was "9 to 5."

This triple-platinum single spent two weeks at No. 1 on that chart, also topping Billboard's Country and Adult Contemporary charts and landing on top of a Country Music Television poll of best country duets of all time. And you certainly couldn't say these singers didn't make that song their own. Sure, you can hear the Bee Gees in the mix, but both singers are so obviously playing to their strengths here with a chemistry that's undeniable.

It almost didn't happen. Rogers had been trying to record the song himself, and after four days of failing to come up with something he found satisfactory he expressed his frustration to Barry Gibb, who, according to a Rogers interview with Taste of Country, told him, "What we need is Dolly Parton." That they did.

9. 'Just Because I'm A Woman' (1968)

The title track to Parton's second solo album is a Parton original that finds her challenging prevailing double standards when it comes to women's sexual pasts, although she never comes right out and says that in so many words.

As she sings in the opening verse, "I can see you're disappointed by the way you look at me/And I'm sorry that I'm not the woman you thought I'd be/Yes, I've made my mistakes, but listen and understand/My mistakes are no worse than yours just because I'm a woman."

She goes on to tell him, "When you look at me, don't feel sorry for yourself/Just think of all the shame you might have brought somebody else." There are also pointed references to how "a man will take a good girl and he'll ruin her reputation, but when he wants to marry, well, that's a different situation," leaving the girl he has ruined to fend for herself "while he looks for an angel to wear his wedding band."

A daring statement for the time, Parton's defiantly feminist anthem found a ready audience at country radio, hitting No. 17 on the Hot Country Songs chart at Billboard.

8. 'To Daddy' (1976)

This brilliantly constructed story song is a Parton original famously recorded by Emmylou Harris for "Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town" after Parton's singing partner, Porter Wagoner, took exception to the feminist moral of the story.

The story begins as a richly detailed portrait of a woman who quietly accepts her role as the wife of a man who doesn't recognize her value. "Mama never seemed to miss the finer things in life/If she did, she never did say so to daddy/She never wanted to be more than a mother and a wife/If she did, she never did say so to daddy."

It only gets sadder from there until you hit the twist coming out of the key change. "One morning we awoke just to find a note that mama carefully wrote and left to daddy," Parton sings. "She said our kids are old enough and they don't need me very much, so I've gone in search for love I need so badly/I have needed you so long, but I just can't keep holding on/She never meant to come back home/And if she did, she never did say so to daddy."

Parton's version, recorded in 1976 but not released until it showed up on a compilation in the '90s, never was released as a single. Harris' version peaked at No. 3 on Billboard's country chart.

7. 'Backwoods Barbie' (2008)

This is as close to a signature song as a woman could hope to have written and recorded no fewer than 42 years down the road for her first charting single .

"Backwoods Barbie" finds Parton drawing on a lifetime of experience, having famously responded to critiques of her appearance in her prime by leaning further into the sexual stereotypes and controlling the narrative by writing her own punchlines with a knowing wink ("It costs a lot of money to look this cheap," she liked to joke).

In "Backwoods Barbie," Parton sings, "I've always been misunderstood because of how I look/Don't judge me by the cover 'cause I'm a real good book/So read into it what you will, but see me as I am/The way I look is just a country girl's idea of glam."

Parton really hits her stride on the choruses, from "Don't let these false eyelashes lead you to believe that I'm as shallow as I look cause I run true and deep" to "I'm just a Backwoods Barbie in a push-up bra and heels/I might look artificial, but where it counts I'm real." The energy is classic Dolly Parton. It didn't chart, but it became a hit in concert.

6. 'Love is Like a Butterfly' (1974)

Parton's delivery is as delicate as a butterfly's wings on this breathtaking original, quite possibly the most contagious melody she has ever written. And the lyrics are as pretty as the melody.

It opens on the chorus, Parton sighing, "Love is like a butterfly, as soft and gentle as a sigh/The multicolored moods of love are like its satin wings/Love makes your heart feel strange inside/It flutters like soft wings in flight/Love is like a butterfly, a rare and gentle thing."

This song became her third consecutive release to top the Billboard country charts when it followed "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You," repurposed two years later as the opening theme to the short-lived "Dolly!" variety show.

5. 'Here You Come Again' (1977)

This song was written by Brill Building royalty, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil. The song was written as a comeback hit for Brenda Lee, who failed to see it as the comeback hit it could have been, deciding not to bother with it.

A textbook case of her loss being Parton's gain, this timeless charmer spent five weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's country chart while becoming the country star's first major crossover to Billboard's Hot 100, where it peaked at No. 3.

There's no mistaking the pop sensibilities that made this song cross over, from the Carpenters-worthy soft-pop charm of that piano intro to the lush orchestration on the bridge.

Parton was reluctant to record the song, which she worried would alienate her country fans, who would think she was selling out. So producer Gary Klein brought in Al Perkins to appease her with some country-centric steel guitar. It's in there, but there's still no mistaking the pop in her country here. This song also won the singer her first Grammy – Best Female Country Vocal Performance.

4. '9 to 5' (1980)

Parton's first chart-topping entry on the Billboard Hot 100 was written as the theme song to a hit film of the same name starring Parton, Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda. It's a working-class anthem whose universal appeal was obvious enough that this career-defining single also topped the easy listening and country charts.

The song is brilliantly constructed with the tension of the verses giving way to the spirited country-funk groove of a chorus that should strike a chord with working people everywhere: "Workin' 9 to 5, what a way to make a livin'/Barely gettin' by, it's all takin' and no givin'/They just use your mind and they never give you credit/It's enough to drive you crazy if you let it."

The most contagious rhyme, though, may be "9 to 5, for service and devotion/You would think that I would deserve a fair promotion."

3. 'Coat of Many Colors' (1971)

Parton often said this was her favorite song she had ever written, inspired by the coat her mother stitched together from whatever rags she had available to keep Dolly warm. The song tells how the kids at school made fun of her.

"And oh, I couldn't understand it, for I felt I was rich," she sings. "And I told them of the love my momma sewed in every stitch/And I told 'em all the story Momma told me while she sewed/And how my coat of many colors was worth more than all their clothes."

Every detail is perfect, lyrics originally scrawled on the back of a dry-cleaning receipt for one of Porter Wagoner's suits on a tour bus. This song peaked at No. 4 on Billboard's country charts and went on to be used in the title of two made-for-TV Dolly Parton biopics.

2. 'I Will Always Love You' (1974)

Whitney Houston's gospel-flavored reinvention of this Dolly Parton ballad for the soundtrack to "The Bodyguard" nearly two decades later remains one of the biggest-selling singles of all time, thanks to the power of Houston's emotionally unguarded vocal and the timeless appeal of the lyrics. But what concerns us here is the original recording and the song, which became her second No. 1 on Billboard's country chart.

Parton has said of the song, "I was so emotional, I was crying when I was writing it." The vulnerability she flashes in that vocal has a way of sneaking up on you, especially in her trembling delivery on the verses.

Take the second verse, where Parton sings, "Bittersweet memories/That's all I am taking with me/Goodbye, please don't cry/We both know that I'm not what you need." I'm not crying. You're crying.

1. 'Jolene' (1973)

I love that this song was inspired, in part, by a bank teller who Parton felt was flirting with her husband, Carl. I haven't seen this bank teller, but something tells me she was not the mythic Jezebel that occupies the lyrics of this timeless country classic, a woman whose "beauty is beyond compare with flaming locks of auburn hair, with ivory skin and eyes of emerald green."

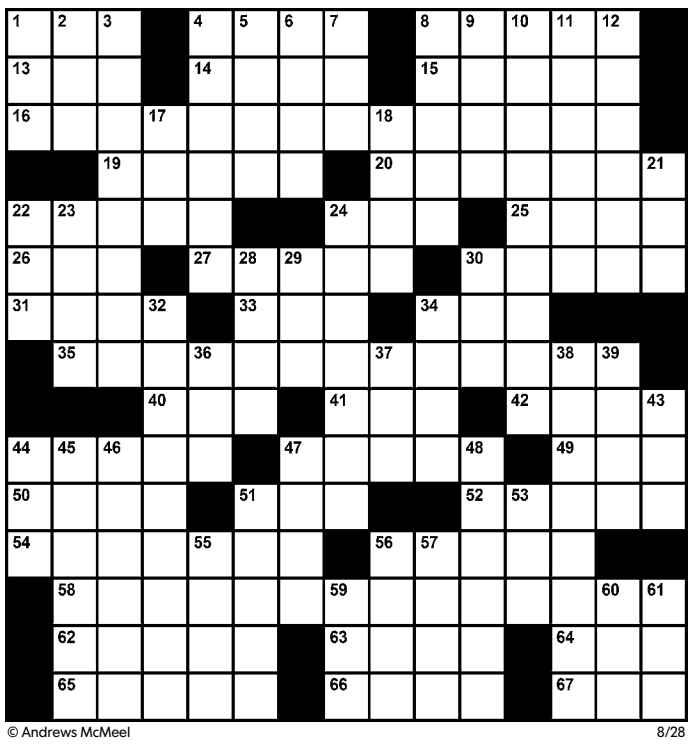
The song is written as a conversation with that other woman, whom Parton confronts here in a way that manages to come across as both vulnerable and drawing on a huge reserve of strength. "I'm begging of you, please don't take my man," Parton pleads in the chorus that opens the song, a plea she rhymes with "Please don't take him just because you can."

This song has inspired a number of notable cover versions, from Beyoncé to the White Stripes, but Parton's original remains the definitive version – in part because she wrote it and in part because there's no mistaking the extent to which she feels those words she's singing.

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amie Walker
BY Mike Graczyk

THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ENOUGH



© Andrews McMeel 8/28

ACROSS
1 Season ticket holder, maybe
4 Org. where you could see a Fever-Dream matchup
8 Playful aquatic mammal
13 The "A" of IPA
14 Get well
15 Male honeybee
16 Unbaked batch in a mixing bowl
19 Glistened
20 Attempts again
22 Glee club section
24 "That's my bone!" sound
25 Pesky flying bug
26 Whisper sweet nothings
27 Hostess snack cakes
30 Worries
31 Overly theatrical thespians
33 "I'm the best cow ever!"
34 No amateur
35 Dining spot about which you might say "It's a total sty around here!"
40 Club on a diamond?
41 Sai kok cuisine
42 One who converts feet into meter?
44 "I can't believe it!"
47 Patches up
49 ___ Four (The Beatles)
50 Notable periods
51 Small batteries
52 Bizarre
54 Activity at a winery
56 "___ and a miss!"
58 "Don't just say the first thing that comes to mind!"
62 The first one was sent in 1971
63 Lab order?
64 2016 Olympics locale
65 Al ___
66 Mas that baa
67 Croque madame ingredient

DOWN
1 Distant
2 Chicken ___ king
3 "First I'm hearing of this"
4 Rushing sound
5 Gas in a diner sign
6 Make cupcakes, for example
7 Boxer Laila
8 More out-there
9 Home run hitter's pace, perhaps
10 Sightseers led by a guide, say
11 V-8, for one
12 Prepare, like leftovers
17 "Fire Island" actor Margaret
18 Makes a boo-boo
21 Ave. crossers
22 German exclamation hidden in "Didn't stand a chance"
23 ___ pose (resting cat's position)
24 Looks up, in a way
28 Exclude
29 Sugar substitute?
30 To and ___
32 Crab who sings "Under the Sea"
34 Give a nudge to
36 1,440 minutes
37 Light brown
38 "Who'd've thunk it?"
39 Listen to
43 "Watch this space for more info" (Abbr.)
44 Badminton divider
45 Delivered a speech
46 Phrase written on a dirty car
47 "The Gift of the ___" (O. Henry story)
48 Soft-serve patterns
51 Lower leg joint
53 "Music for Airports" artist Brian
55 Still able to win
56 Worry
57 "I am having so much fun on Goofy's Sky School!"
59 Common article
60 Short-term job
61 Monopolize

Thursday's Answer

C	S	I		G	R	A	S	P		G	A	M	M	A
H	O	N		A	N	C	H	O		U	N	I	O	N
O	R	S		B	A	T	O	N		A	S	C	O	T
P	R	O	M			I	V	Y		V	E	S	T	S
R	O	L	E	R	E	V	E	R	S	A	L			
A	W	E	S	O	M	E		I	O	S		T	H	E
			S	I	M		P	D	A		S	H	O	E
R	O	Y	A	L	A	L	B	E	R	T	H	A	L	L
V	L	O	G			A	S	S		R	A	T	E	S
S	A	M	E	D	A	Y			F	O	R	D		
			R	U	S	S	I	A	N	D	O	L	L	
B	E	D	H	O	G		M	L	K		S	E	A	L
A	L	I	E	N		M	O	L	E	S		S	P	A
B	L	A	M	E		O	R	B	I	T		I	S	M
Y	E	L	P	S		N	E	E	D	Y		T	E	A

8/27

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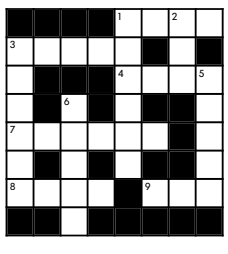
TXTPERT



8/28 © USA TODAY and Rich Coulter

Across
1. 6277
3. 24253
4. 6665
7. 432836
8. 7729
9. 686

Down
1. 636237
2. 746
3. 247467
5. 56726
6. 72426

Today's theme
Religion

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

Yesterday's solution 8/27

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

						7		
7				5	1		9	
	4			6	2			
3				7	6	1		
8								2
		4	1	8				7
			8	1			5	
	2		5	4				3
		5						

8/28 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

2					3
		4	5		
	4		1		
		3		5	
		5	2		
6					5

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

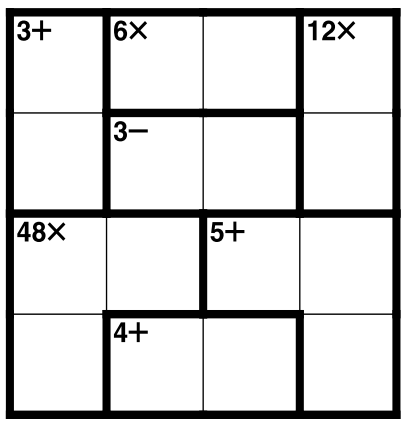
Thursday's Answers

1	9	8	6	5	3	4	2	7
5	7	3	4	2	1	8	6	9
4	2	6	9	8	7	3	1	5
3	1	4	7	6	5	9	8	2
7	6	5	2	9	8	1	4	3
2	8	9	3	1	4	5	7	6
6	5	1	8	7	9	2	3	4
8	3	7	5	4	2	6	9	1
9	4	2	1	3	6	7	5	8

2	3	5	6	4	1
6	4	1	2	3	5
4	1	2	3	5	6
3	5	6	4	1	2
1	6	3	5	2	4
5	2	4	1	6	3

8/27

KENKEN



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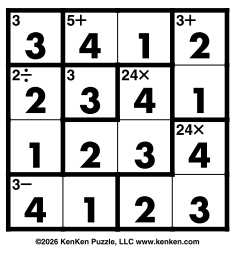
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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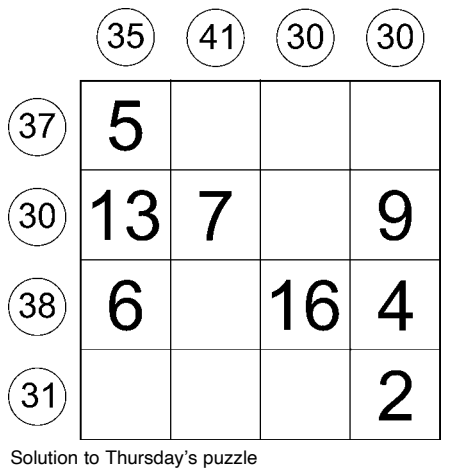
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **EASY**



Solution to Thursday's puzzle

14	9	2	4
10	5	7	1
12	3	13	15
6	16	8	11

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 8/28

Find and Circle:
Five mammals starting with L ☑☐☐☐☐
BLT: ____, ____ and ____ ☐☐☐
Three seven-letter birds ☐☐☐
Two numbers ending with Y ☐☐
Direction of the sunrise ☐

Thursday's answer: FIDDLER HERMIT STONE BLUE KING SNOW / GUAVA PEACH APPLE MANGO LEMON / MEXICO PANAMA JAPAN / LUNAR SOLAR / SKIM

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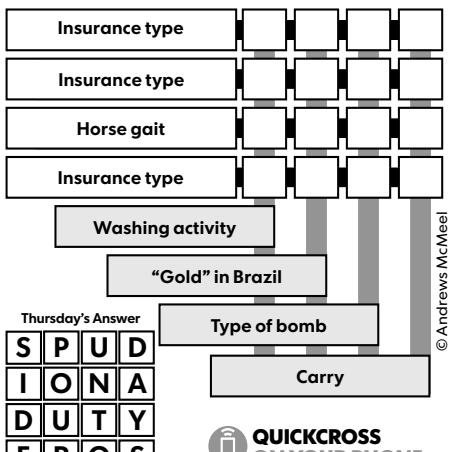
QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 8/28



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Thursday's Answer

S	P	U	D
I	O	N	A
D	U	T	Y
E	R	O	S

8/27

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 8/28

1. **MINERAL**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **ON**

Clues:
1. Fizzy refreshment
2. Aquatic team sport
3. Former Manhattan stadium
4. Legal justification
5. Permanently
6. Tallies
7. Trust

Thursday's Answer

CLINT	BLACK
BLACK	FOREST
FOREST	GREEN
GREEN	ONION
ONION	SOUP
SOUP	BOWL
BOWL	OVER

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

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DON'T QUOTE ME®

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Comedian Lily Tomlin talks about modern life.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
IF RACE RAT STILL THAT TROUBLE WIN

"THE _____ WITH THE RAT ___ IS ___ EVEN ___ YOU ___ YOU'RE _____ A ___."

8/28

Thursday's Answer: "The difficult part in an argument is not to defend one's opinion, but rather to know it." - André Maurois

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 carries (5)	_____
2 daily routines (6)	_____
3 vocational pursuit (6)	_____
4 Mystic's state (11)	_____
5 "sport" in 1900 Olympics (7)	_____
6 nacreous (10)	_____
7 1990s tennis star Pete (7)	_____

TOT	OQU	EER	HAB	NE
CAR	ALE	RAS	ET	SA
OP	ENT	CUT	CON	ITS
CTI	MP	ES	SC	CR

Thursday's Answers: 1. REORGANIZED 2. OUTLAWS 3. VISTAS 4. ZENDAYA 5. EPIPHANIES 6. PATCHETT 7. HASTE 8/28

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

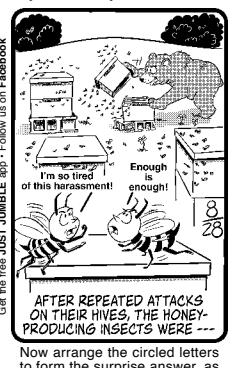
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

EVREG

UCENL

DEYMLE

BRVLAE



Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

"___-_____"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: MINUS BOXER ODDEST HIPPIE
Answer: She wanted her husband to take out the garbage, but he considered himself to be — INDISPOSED

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BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Tranquility
5 Handled roughly
10 Spigots
14 Operatic song
15 "— — Lucy"
16 Old Greek coin
17 Lady
18 Reef material
19 Spectacular thing
20 Precious metal
22 Tell on
24 Oklahoma town
25 Clinton's VP
26 Textile
29 Informed on
33 Shoelace tip
34 Temperamental
35 Unclose, poetically
36 Amphibian
37 Tropical plants
38 Genealogy diagram
39 Curve
40 Whittle
41 Pondered
42 Body of water between Ohio and Ontario (2 wds.)
44 Loving touch
45 — mater
46 Climb
47 Group of geese
50 Criterion
54 Fall birthstone
55 — goose
57 Butter rival
58 Lie about doing nothing
59 Love
60 Lessen
61 Worry
62 Stair post
63 Makes as a profit

DOWN
1 Bivouac
2 Seed appendage
3 "The Simpsons" daughter
4 Became proficient in
5 Outdoor meal
6 Audibly
7 The early bird gets one
8 Actress — Gabor
9 Shoulder muscles
10 Pre-Columbian Mexican people
11 Touch on
12 Voting place
13 Skid
21 First (Abbr.)
23 Like a dilettante
25 Garden figure
26 Deadly
27 Where Greeks met
28 "Men in —"
29 Figure out
30 Racer at the track
31 Swords
32 Acts
34 Tennis great — Sharapova
37 Cheese variety
38 Decline (2 wds.)
40 Small room
41 Chief
43 Young bird
44 Name in fashion
46 Gawk
47 Links game
48 On — — (equivalent)
49 Look
50 Decelerate
51 Wings
52 Housing expense
53 "Handsome is as handsome —"
56 Poem type

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

C	L	E	W			V	E	T	S		B	L	A	B
R	U	M	I		R	A	D	I	I		L	O	N	E
A	K	I	N		A	L	I	E	N		O	S	T	E
B	E	T	E	L	N	U	T		G	U	T	T	E	R
			S	A	G	E		C	U	R	T			
C	O	O	K	S			B	A	L	L	O	O	N	
L	I	C	I	T		S	A	G	A			R	O	D
A	L	A	N		C	I	D	E	R		S	I	T	E
M	E	L			L	E	G	S		T	H	O	R	N
	R	A	M	P	A	G	E			H	O	N	E	Y
			O	U	S	E		S	M	E	W			
S	C	O	U	T	S		P	H	O	N	E	T	I	C
E	L	L	S		I	D	E	A	S		R	I	C	A
R	U	L	E		F	U	E	L	S		E	L	O	N
B	E	A	R		Y	E	L	L			D	E	N	T

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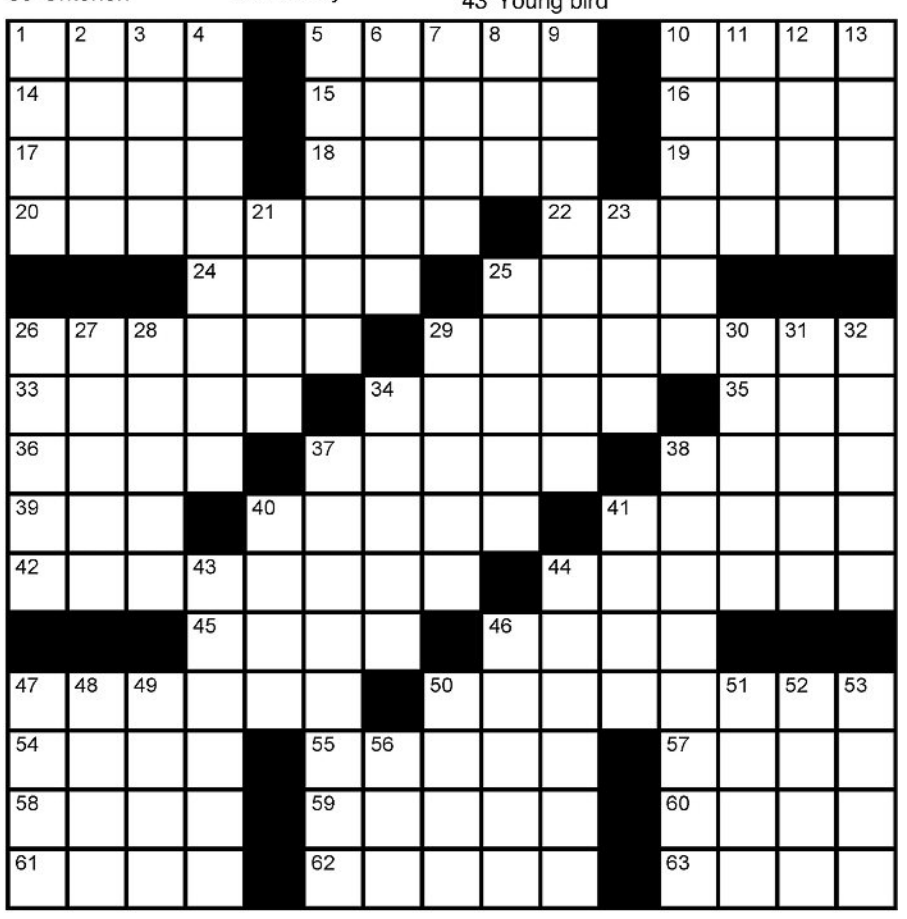

MOVIES

‘Tony’ sheds light on Bourdain’s dark side

Spoiler alert! We’re discussing minor details about the plot of the Anthony Bourdain biopic “Tony.” Stop reading if you haven’t seen the movie yet and don’t want to know what happens.

To many, Anthony Bourdain is the patron saint of the culinary underground.

Through his TV series “No Reservations” and “Parts Unknown,” the celebrity chef thoughtfully introduced viewers to diverse cultures and cuisines, all with his trademark curiosity and disarming wit. But his gregarious public persona masked a quietly tortured man who struggled with depression and substance abuse for decades and died by suicide in 2018 at age 61.

A new film seeks to reckon with some of his sharper edges. “Tony” (in theaters now) follows a college-age Bourdain (played by Dominic Sessa) as he runs off to Provincetown, Massachusetts, in the mid-1970s. Upon arrival, he begrudgingly takes a summer job as a dishwasher at a seafood restaurant to pay the bills.

Directed by Matt Johnson, the movie unflinchingly depicts a Bourdain that none of us ever saw on television: a volatile, often petulant kid who is thrown out of bars for being too drunk and making unwanted overtures toward women. Even at work, he’s quick to pick fights with his fellow kitchen staff, and he doesn’t think twice about stealing money from his boss (Antonio Banderas).

It’s a prickly portrayal that aligns with how Bourdain described himself in his 2000 memoir, “Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly.”

“He doesn’t pull any punches about what an angry little (expletive) he was,” says Lou Howe, who cowrote the screenplay with Todd Bartels.

“That liberated us to paint a truthful, warts-and-all portrait of him as a young man. The driving idea was: How did (he) become this ambassador of empathy? He was known for his kindness and all these values we revere him for, but how did he get from point A to point B?”

Bourdain’s carefree persona in fact was ‘a suit of armor’

Later in life, Bourdain spoke candidly about the emptiness and isolation of constantly being on the road, and in his 2010 memoir “Medium Raw,” he wrote that he was “aimless and regularly suicidal” after his divorce from his wife, Nancy Putkoski, in 2005.

With the support of Bourdain’s estate, “Tony” very much imagines him as an irascible lone wolf who shuts himself off from his family and lies to Nancy (Emilia Jones), his then-love interest. Initially, he shirks his duties at the restaurant, pompously claiming that he’s writing a novel and that washing dishes is beneath him.

But gradually he comes to see the fulfillment and community that food can foster.

“Tony” is loosely based on three chapters of “Kitchen Confidential,” but it also pulls from other interviews and books such as 2021’s “Bourdain: The Definitive Oral Biography,” written by his former assistant Laurie Woolever.

In Woolever’s book, “his ex-wife, Nancy, and several of the chefs who knew him talk about this time in his life when he was a real wayward soul who treated the world like his ashtray,” Bartels says.

“We posited that maybe in this summer, he grew from a selfish person and a narcissist to someone who was deeply interested in other people.”

Like any biopic, “Tony” takes liberties with Bourdain’s life. The movie fictionally suggests Bourdain was rejected by a Vassar College writing fellowship, which prompted him to run away from home to Provincetown.

The film also implies that his scorned, underdog spirit was spurred in part by his mother, Gladys (Dagmara Dominczyk). “Tony” depicts Gladys as an aloof and tough-to-please matriarch when in actuality she was her son’s biggest champion.

For much of the movie “Tony,” Anthony Bourdain (Dominic Sessa) is extremely abrasive and self-absorbed.
PROVIDED BY SEACIA PAVAO/A24

Throughout Bourdain’s life, “a lot of people would say he was effortlessly social and unbothered,” Johnson says. “What was interesting to me is that this reputation seemed to be a defensive persona he had created. Yes, he’s cool and seems ready for anything, but that must be an answer to something in his childhood: this suit of armor to protect him.”

‘Tony’ captures his ‘romantic’ view of drugs and alcohol

“Tony” also doesn’t shy from Bourdain’s addictive behaviors; there are numerous scenes of him drinking alone and snorting cocaine on the job. Johnson was particularly fascinated by the almost Hunter S. Thompson way that Bourdain wrote about his relationship with drugs.

In “Kitchen Confidential,” he fondly describes his Provincetown compatriots as “pirates” who had sex and booze in excess and lived their lives with “a carefree disregard for all conventional morality.”

He writes that they threw themselves into their kitchen chores, but always fueled by marijuana and “prodigious amounts of cocaine and amphetamines.”

For Bourdain, these were “tools of the chef’s trade, and he loved being one of the guys that could use drugs to get through a shift,” Johnson says.

“It felt very clearly like Anthony Bourdain’s romantic ideation around drug culture. He looked at those things as admirable and things that he wanted to chase.”

Bourdain didn’t start using heroin until the 1980s when he was working in New York restaurants. He developed a severe addiction to that and crack cocaine, and he eventually checked himself into rehab in the early 1990s.

Although he remained sober from hard drugs for the rest of his life, he never quit alcohol, and one of his oft-repeated travel mantras was to “drink heavily with locals” whenever possible.

Through the pleasure-seeking fictional character of fry cook Sal (Leo Woodall), Johnson wanted to show the “double-edged” sword of Bourdain’s life: the thrill and camaraderie that partying provides while also being enormously destructive to one’s physical and mental health.

“It’s Leo’s character who really expresses the cleanest Bourdain-ism: You’re on this planet once, so you should enjoy the ride,” Johnson says.

“I mean, Bourdain’s famous line is: ‘Your body is not a temple, it’s an amusement park.’ There’s a positive and a negative in that message, which is what the film is trying to get at.”

If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing or texting “988.”

De Niro

Continued from Page 1B

raves is “terrific” and “very professional.” The father of seven also is busy at home with his 3-year-old daughter, Gia, with partner Tiffany Chen.

He tells us what he has been watching, his hopes for the year ahead, and much more:

This conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity and length.

Question: You’ve starred in many crime dramas through the years. What set this one apart?

Answer: When I read the script, I liked the fact that there was this family drama going on between the father and the estranged son, and then the thriller aspects sort of rolled into each other. That was good. It’s just an interesting movie. I met James, I liked him and that was it. I said, “I’m in.”

You and Michael Keaton were both in Quentin Tarantino’s “Jackie Brown,” although you didn’t actually share scenes together. What was it like to finally get to act alongside him in this?

It was good. He was perfect for it. I don’t even know how it came about, but I was very happy that he was doing it.

Between this film, “The Irishman” and “Killers of the Flower Moon,” you’ve been doing some of your very best work in recent years. Aside from the obvious – a good script, good cast, good director – what has changed about how you pick projects now?

Especially as you get older, I have less time to waste, so I have to be very careful. I have to juggle between family time, doing a project, where it’ll be, and how much time it’ll be. Then I’m able to commit to it fully, yet still be [present] with all my other obligations, especially family.

Has Martin Scorsese floated any ideas of potential films you could reunite on?

I hope so, but I don’t know. I have other projects that I’m working on with people that are substantial, but I don’t know when they’ll be done. I imagine probably not before the new year.

You just celebrated your birthday. What are you most hopeful for in the next year: personally, professionally or even just for the world in general?

I don’t even use the word “hope” anymore with [President Trump’s] administration. They have to be gotten out. … They are stupid for following him because they ought to know better, the rest of his gang. We can’t have them in office anymore. It can’t be. He’s just going to destroy not only the country, but other parts of the world. It’s insane. That’s a big concern of mine, and I think a lot of people now.

When he shares an AI-generated video saying that you and other celebrities have “derangement syndrome,” do you pay attention? Or do you not even want to give it oxygen?

“Trump Derangement Syndrome” is because he’s given it to you for a reason. People resent deeply what he’s been doing. There’s some that follow him … under any conditions. Whatever their reasons are, I don’t know. It’s a cult, I guess, in some ways.

The thing that always amazes me is that if he had just been a decent person and tried to do the right thing, we wouldn’t be in this situation. But he’s not. And I think a lot of it happened from [Trump hosting] “The Apprentice.” … Kids are looking at [it in] their mid-teens, then they’re eligible to vote later and they vote with a family. I think that part of the country watching “The Apprentice” had a tremendous influence. I could be wrong on why he got elected. It’s crazy.

(Editor’s note: In a statement to USA TODAY, White House spokesman Davis Ingle referred to De Niro as “a washed up has-been who hasn’t been relevant in 30 years,” suggesting the actor “should seek immediate treatment for a debilitating case of Trump Derangement Syndrome that has completely rotted his peanut-sized brain.”)

Your youngest daughter is still quite little, but is there a film of yours that you’re most excited to show her when she gets a bit older?

My older kids now, I used to joke and threaten to show them “Cape Fear” if they misbehaved. (Laughs.) No, there’s a couple of films she could see. “Focker” is coming out on Thanksgiving, and then there’s “The War With Grandpa” and “Meet the Parents.”

I read that your teenage daughter, Helen, is a big fan of “Outer Banks” and that you watch it with her. Is there another film or TV show that she’s put you on to?

Well, I used to walk by when she was watching “Outer Banks.” Then there was the Netflix one. It’s kind of sci-fi. What is it? They’re doing a big play of it on Broadway?

“Stranger Things”?

Yeah, I was in the kitchen when she was watching it and I said, “This is interesting.” So I watched that and then we went to see the play. That was really good. And then more recently, she was watching “Modern Family” – the old [episodes], like 10 years old – and they were terrific. So I started watching those with her.

Parton

Continued from Page 1B

demurred with a polite, crafted response about his unflagging support.

And while Parton did share in a 2003 Rolling Stone profile that after surgery in 1982 for “female problems” she was unable to have children, she also shared that the couple’s choice to not become parents early in their marriage meant she could dedicate herself to her career, a notion that is sneered at even today but never produced backlash for Parton.

That same dedication to secrecy – even more impressive in a world where TikToks and tabloids conspire to demolish any celebrity – was employed this last year of Parton’s life. The cancellation of her anticipated Las Vegas residency in May, coupled with Parton’s sister sending out an SOS for prayers, stoked uneasy thoughts. Could Parton’s illness be more serious than kidney stones and exhaustion? In some way, we all knew it was. But no one wanted to envision a world without her, so we shoved those thoughts into the next news cycle.

But never a word was leaked about her indeed more serious illness. Nor her hospital stay in Nashville, where she died after what her team called a “brief battle with cancer.”

Even gossip vultures respected her.

Dolly Parton attends the opening of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s exhibit “Dolly Parton: Journey of a Seeker” in 2025, in Nashville, Tennessee.
JASON KEMPIN/ GETTY IMAGES

Parton was more than a musical role model for young women

It’s impossible to canvass the landscape of female country superstars and not notice Parton’s fairy dust sprinkled across so many of them.

Would Shania Twain and Faith Hill have been accepted by the pop music conglomerate without Parton stepping into the Top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1978 with “Here You Come Again,” then returning with “9 to 5” and her iconic duet with friend Kenny Rogers, “Islands in the Stream”?

Would the astute songwriting of Kacey Musgraves and Lainey Wilson – both of whom have professed eternal adoration of Parton – flourished without Parton’s musical imprint?

Would Taylor Swift have witnessed a role model of epic business savvy, a woman who branded cake mixes, cookware and cosmetics, and who told Elvis Presley to take his blue suede shoes out the door when his team wanted him to record Parton’s “I Will Always Love You” and take half of her publishing royalties? That decision later earned Parton more than $10 million in royalties, according to Forbes, after Whitney Houston broke records with her enduring version of the ballad.

Even if you didn’t have an appetite for Parton’s music … how often did you hear anyone disparage Dolly Rebecca Parton?

In her comments about Parton’s death, Swift praised the icon for her music that “thawed even the coldest hearts,” but also for her “backbone of steel to defend her own self worth as an artist” and “for the tightropes she walked so that young girls like me could grow up dreaming of joining the circus, too.”

Of course, Swift and her music peers probably would have found their way, even without that paradigm of moxie known as Dolly Parton. But how much sweeter it was that they had her rainbow as their guide.

You can check the headlines from your home state or city

We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 7B**

A garden of dreams

Dolly Parton is gone. Her dream lives on in Tennessee

Eve Chen USA TODAY

Dolly Parton didn't ride the thrill rides at Dollywood.

"I think I'd lose my hair. I think I'd lose my nerve before even going on it," she joked when her namesake theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, opened its Big Bear Mountain coaster in 2023.

She was quick to joke and laugh, even at her own expense.

It's part of what made her so relatable despite being a big star.

But she was even quicker to smile her big, bright smile – especially when talking about Dollywood and the region she long called home.

"I'm proud of all of it," she told me in 2025 when Dollywood celebrated its 40th anniversary.

As she now rides what she called "the big roller coaster in the sky," here's a look back at how Parton saw her legacy there:

A dream come true

Dollywood was Parton's dream.

"When I was growing up here in the Great Smoky Mountains, we used to come every now and then down to this area," Parton said during a 2023 interview at Dollywood's DreamMore Resort & Spa. With perfectly coiffed hair, long pink-and-red manicured nails and clothes tailored to her petite frame, she was a far cry from the little girl who was teased for the patchwork coat of many colors her mother made. But she recalled her humble childhood as vividly as she has in songs over the years.

"When it was the county fair, we'd come to town, and I used to think if I make it big, if I get rich like I was dreaming I might, that I'd love to do something special, to come back home and build a

See DOLLY, Page 6B

Dolly Parton waves to fans during opening day of Dollywood's 41st season in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, on March 13. ANGELINA ALCANTAR/USA TODAY NETWORK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION TREATMENT BY ABEL MUNIZ MONTENEGRO; AND GETTY IMAGES

New Fast & Furious ride is open, but there's no guarantee you can catch it

Eve Chen
USA TODAY

UNIVERSAL CITY, CA – It's been 25 years since "The Fast and the Furious" hit theaters, and for the first time, fans can experience what it's like to sit in the driver's seat.

Universal Studios Hollywood's highly anticipated Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift roller coaster is in its soft opening, and it's as thrilling as anything seen on-screen.

"The drift, the sway, and full rotation, there's almost this ... suspension of disbelief, that you're actually in a car and you're mimicking those moves," Jon Corfino, vice president of Creative at Universal Studios Hollywood, told USA TODAY.

But here's why some fans may want to wait a little longer before they try it.

'It's just such a unique experience'

Yes and no. The Southern California coaster has soft-opened, meaning it may be available but could close without notice as Universal fine-tunes its operations. Additionally, the park is working to address noise complaints from neighbors over the screams of enthusiastic riders. It's implementing extra sound-reduction measures, even though testing confirms the attraction is operating within sound ordinance requirements.

Fans coming from far away may want to wait until an official opening date is announced.

In the meantime, Los Angeles-based annual passholder Doug Perry said, "don't expect it to be open and just

See ROLLER COASTER, Page 6B

Cruisers find some top sites are a hike

Many lines don't dock close to tourist centers

Nathan Diller
USA TODAY

My Holland America Line cruise got me only so close to my destination.

I hoped to visit Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, where U.S. forces landed on D-Day, but our ship docked in Le Havre, about an hour and 40 minutes away by car. Though the cruise line offered excursions to the area, my boyfriend and I opted to book a rental car and make a day trip of it – complete with a stop at a roadside bakery for jambon-beurre sandwiches.

Our self-designed outing went smoothly, and we made it back to the ship on time, but new cruisers may not always realize that marquee destinations can be quite a distance from where ships dock.

However, there are ways to plan accordingly – and even avoid the long trek altogether.

Why do cruises stop at far-away ports?

Deep-water ports equipped to accommodate large cruise ships can be an hour or more away from tourist centers, said Jared Feldman, owner of the travel agency Jafeldma Travel.

"Modern cruise ships, they're like floating cities, so they need deep channels, long berths, robust security," he said. "And especially with Europe's most iconic cities, they're not coastal, so the nearest suitable seaport is inevitably going to be some distance away."

Examples include Civitavecchia, Italy, which offers access to Rome but is about 40 minutes by train or an hour away by car, and Southampton in England, more than an hour by train from London and a nearly two-hour drive. In the United States, Port Canaveral, the port for Orlando, is roughly an hour by car from the area's major theme parks.

Cruise lines often denote those port cities on itineraries in parentheses next to the name of the better-known destination. "Cruise lines, they're selling itineraries, not necessarily individual destinations," Feldman said. Listed stops like Rome or Florence – the latter of which is accessible via La Spezia or Livorno – are "really like a shorthand for a region, not necessarily a guarantee that you're going to be stepping off the gangway in that city center."

See CRUISE PORTS, Page 6B

Labor Day trek can go better if you know best times to travel

But trip could bog down if you try busiest periods

Eve Chen
USA TODAY

Travelers hoping for a quick Labor Day getaway may find themselves snarled by traffic if they don't hit the road at the right time.

AAA and transportation data and insights provider INRIX have determined the best and worst times to travel by car over the holiday weekend.

AAA has also narrowed down the most popular destinations, based on its booking data.

"Travelers are seeking memorable experiences, and these top Labor Day destinations reflect that desire," Stacey Barber, vice president of AAA Travel, said in a news release. "AAA members are embarking on Alaska cruises and river cruises, touring national parks and sightseeing in Europe."

See TRAFFIC, Page 6B

Traffic

Continued from Page 5B

When is Labor Day 2026?

Labor Day falls on Sept. 7 this year.

What is the best time to travel on Labor Day weekend?

The best time to hit the road varies by day.

According to AAA and INRIX:

- On Sept. 3, the best time to drive is before 1 p.m.
- On Sept. 4, the best time is before noon.
- On Sept. 5, the best time is before 10 a.m.
- Minimal traffic is expected Sept. 6.
- On Sept. 7, the best time is before noon.

What are the worst travel days for Labor Day weekend?

Friday and Monday are expected to be the busiest days for travel, but Saturday will be busy, too.

According to AAA and INRIX:

- On Sept. 3, the worst time to drive is 2 to 7 p.m.
- On Sept. 4, the worst time is noon to 8 p.m.
- On Sept. 5, the worst time is 1 to 5 p.m.
- Minimal traffic is expected Sept. 6.
- On Sept. 7, the worst time is 2 to 5 p.m.

AAA's top 10 domestic Labor Day destinations

1. Seattle
2. Orlando
3. Boston
4. Denver
5. New York
6. Chicago
7. Anaheim/Los Angeles
8. Las Vegas
9. Anchorage
10. Atlanta

The top 10 international destinations were all in Europe or Canada.

What's the U.S. average gas price?

As of Aug. 24, AAA's national average is $4.09 a gallon of regular fuel. It was $3.19 a gallon last Labor Day.

Road trip tips

Drivers are encouraged to inspect their vehicles before road trips and to pack emergency supplies such as jumper cables, flashlights, a first aid kit, and extra water and snacks. AAA notes that it responded to more than 400,000 roadside assistance calls last Labor Day weekend.

Cruise ports

Continued from Page 5B

How to make the most of your time in port

Feldman said that when ports are far from popular destinations, cruise lines often arrive early and stay late to give guests more time there.

Holland America, for example, visits Le Havre two to three times a year on average with calls usually lasting from 7 a.m. into midevening, the cruise line told USA TODAY. In addition to visiting the D-Day landing beaches and other activities, guests can book excursions to Paris, about a two-hour train ride or 2½-hour drive away.

The cruise line also visits Cherbourg once or twice a year, which is closer to sites like Omaha Beach but farther from Paris (Holland America does not offer Paris excursions there).

Even long outings are doable. I booked a 10½-hour excursion through Royal Caribbean that included a morning visit to Pisa followed by a pasta lunch and free time in Florence when my cruise stopped in La Spezia in July.

Packing so much in seemed daunting, but our tour guide kept us on schedule, and the day flew by as we took photos of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and explored Florence's historic streets on foot – and made it back in plenty of time to catch a tender to the ship.

Paul Kiritsy, CEO of Shore Excursions Group, an excursion company, argued that for cruise passengers, "it's less about distance and much more about maximizing the experience in port."

"Some of the world's most iconic cruise experiences – including destinations such as Rome and Florence – naturally involve more travel time from the port, and they remain among the most popular excursions because they give guests the opportunity to experience the landmarks and places they came to experience," he told USA TODAY in an email.

The company's return-to-ship guarantee also promises it will "arrange and pay for your accommodations, meals, and transportation to the next port of call, and we will pay you an additional $1,000 USD per customer for the inconvenience" if a tour's late arrival causes guests to miss their ship, according to its website (though those instances are rare).

The company also takes a "disciplined approach" to curating its portfolio, Kiritsy said.

"Our team of experts identify the best options in top cruise destinations around the world – featuring local tour guides with decades of experience in delivering excellent experiences," he said. "We review where cruisers are sailing and identify experiences that are immersive, unique, authentic, and offered to cruisers at the best value. In addition, we take into consideration breadth of product to ensure we offer a substantial variety of tours for all types of travelers, including cultural/historical tours, scenic, water-based activities, culinary, nature, active/adventure, and more."

Plenty of ports visited by mainstream lines are in convenient locales, but some styles of cruising are particularly known for getting guests close to the action.

River cruises, for example, "will nearly in all cases, get you closest to the city center with very, very minimal transit time, if any," Feldman said.

With some destinations enacting limits on cruises, including restrictions on the size of ships or number of guests that can visit, small ships – which can have as few as a couple of hundred passengers – may be able to go where bigger vessels can't, Feldman said. "So by electing to go on a smaller ship, they're underneath those capacity limits that are set, and they're able to dock and just get a lot closer to that port city."

Contributing: Josh Rivera

Roller coaster

Continued from Page 5B

hope that it is."

Perry has followed the ride closely as both a coaster fan and social media manager and Pacific Southwest representative for American Coaster Enthusiasts, which describes itself as the world's largest club for ride enthusiasts. He and his twin brother, Derek, have each ridden more than 1,400 coasters worldwide and have already ridden Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift multiple times. "Every time, it's like, 'Oh, I want to go right back on that if I can," Perry said. "It's just such a unique experience, and it's so fun."

Doug and Derek Perry have ridden Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift multiple times. Doug said they use the Single Rider and Universal Express lanes when available, but have waited up to two hours in the standard standby line. PROVIDED BY DOUG PERRY

Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift spins guests 360 degrees along a track built into the hillside of Universal Studios Hollywood. EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

Coaster specs

Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift is an Intamin coaster featuring 4,100 feet of track, 360-degree spins, multiple inversions and speeds of up to 72 miles an hour. The track itself hugs the hillside between the park's upper and lower lots and offers stunning views of the surrounding valley.

Perry noted that unlike other spinning coasters, whose rotation may depend on weight distribution within the vehicle, these coaster cars are programmed to spin at specific times along the track, in sync with the onboard audio. "It can be disorienting in a good way with going backwards and shifting to the side and everything," he said.

"There is no doubt that you are thrilled out of your mind, but you're not going to feel like you've gone 15 rounds with Mike Tyson," Corfino echoed. "You will have gone really fast and you will spin out and you will be drifting, but you're going to get out and you're going to be OK."

Attractions 360 captured point-of-view video on the ride.

What cars are in the Fast and the Furious ride?

Corfino said designers evaluated numerous vehicles from the films before deciding on four "natural" icons for the coaster's trains:

- The lead car is modeled after Dominic Toretto's black 1970 Dodge Charger R/T.
- Two cars are modeled after vehicles driven by Brian O'Conner: a blue 2002 Nissan Skyline GT-R R34 and an orange 1994 Toyota Supra MK IV, which fans may recognize as his "10-second car."
- A fourth car is modeled after the orange 1997 Mazda RX-7 driven by Han Seoul-oh.

"We're not trying to put you in the movie, but we paid an amazing amount of attention to the design of the vehicles," Corfino said, not wanting to disappoint fans who he knew would notice the details. "You see the engine on the front of the Charger that's there, the width of the tires ... all the seams, gas caps, taillights, everything that's there is very authentic." Guests will see other vehicles, including props from the films, along the ride's queue. They'll also find QR codes that direct them to clips from the making of the films.

"It kind of harkens us back to one of the things that Universal Studios Hollywood has that's very unique. We're an authentic motion picture studio," Corfino said. "It's kind of taking you behind the scenes into the movies again."

Universal Orlando Resort also is building a Fast & Furious coaster, but it's still under construction. Its track will be different from Hollywood's version.

Dolly

Continued from Page 5B

park of my own," she said.

Parton co-owned Dollywood with Herschend Family Entertainment and served as "Dreamer-in-Chief."

In a park video shared on Aug. 26, Dollywood Parks & Resorts President Eugene Naughton said:

"I know a lot of people are going to change without Dolly being present here, and I want to assure you that it's not. Just know that we're all going to keep her alive here, and it's hard, right? We're all humans, so I ask everyone to just remember that and to honor how she would treat others. Show kindness. Don't be afraid to love big. Don't be afraid to dream big. Don't be afraid to care more about others because that's exactly what we're going to do 'cause that's exactly what she'd want us to do. The show must go on."

Just about everything in the park circles back to Parton. Guests can walk through one of her old tour buses, see a replica of her childhood home, and marvel at the big wigs and flamboyant clothes she wore over her storied career.

"We try to, as they call it, Dollyize it," she laughed in 2023, but she took real pride in sharing her roots through the park's music and crafts.

"I love that because this is who we are. This is what we do. And this is what my people have done, the way they've made a living through the years," Parton said. "I feel like all the people here are my people, in this area. I even wrote a song, you know. 'These are my mountains, my valleys. These are my rivers flowing like a song. These are my people.' All these multicolored rainbows, these are my people. This is my home."

Dollywood's impact

Last year, Parton called Dollywood more than she imagined it could be, and it's still growing.

This month, the park opened its newest attraction, NightFlight Expedition, an indoor family water ride. The attraction is the latest project in a planned half-billion-dollar investment across Dollywood properties over a decade. Dollywood itself is credited with creating 23,000 jobs for the region and an annual direct economic impact of $1.8 billion, according to a Tennessee Department of Transportation case study. It's become the biggest employer in Sevier County and has been ranked among the best in the country.

"I was just dreaming of having a wonderful place for people to come, have a good time, having all kinds of things to enjoy and providing jobs for my family and the kin folks around here and the good neighbors. And sure enough, we've got all that now," Parton said in 2025.

"Plus, not to be selfish with just my own, but there's so many great businesses around here, so many great things for people to see," she added, crediting Great Smoky Mountains National Park as the area's original attraction. "This, to me, is sincerely one of the greatest places that anyone could visit. This part of the country, right here in Pigeon Forge, Sevierville and Gatlinburg, and in this general area, there's just so much."

Dollywood's reach

Asked what she'd like folks to know about Dollywood in 2025, Parton was quick to reply, with a chuckle, "Well, I want them to know they should get here, and do whatever you got to do to get here because once you've been here you're going to love it." Countless families who never have visited Dollywood also benefit from it, through the Dollywood Foundation. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has given away more than 300 million books for free to encourage early literacy.

"All those books in the hands of all those children, that's one of the things I'm proudest of here at the park with the Dollywood Foundation and what we do here," Parton said at Big Bear Mountain's opening ceremony. "Because not only do we make good money here – and we appreciate you for that – we also give back. We do a lot of wonderful things through the foundation, and the Imagination Library is one of the things I'm proudest of and want to be remembered for as much as anything I've ever done when I'm up there on the big roller coaster in the sky."

Parton gave to numerous other causes over the years, including supporting wildfire victims and funding the development of a COVID-19 vaccine.

"I believe in keeping my heart open above everything else and keeping my mind open in case some good thought might run through there now and then," she said in 2023. "But I just love people, and I just think if you do wind up in a position where you can help, you should help."

Dollywood has directed folks who want to honor Parton to consider donating to the Imagination Library.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Montgomery: Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall is investigating OpenAI after an artificial intelligence model being tested by the company escaped its controlled environment and hacked into the systems of AI platform Hugging Face.

ALASKA Juneau: Retired teacher Dan J. Sullivan advanced to the general election for U.S. Senate in Alaska, the Associated Press and NBC News projected, creating potential voter confusion with incumbent Sen. Dan Sullivan, who also advanced.

ARIZONA Gila County: A Massachusetts-based company is looking to mine wastewater in Arizona as a potential source of valuable copper. SiTration is running two pilot projects in Arizona this year, hoping to pull copper from wastewater from a historic mining operation in the Globe-Miami mining district.

ARKANSAS Fort Smith: The Fort Smith Regional Art Museum will celebrate the centennial of Historic Route 66 with "The Lost Highway," a new exhibition by artist David Malcom Rose featuring miniature recreations of roadside businesses left behind by the interstate era.

CALIFORNIA Berkeley: While California voters prefer progressive candidates, they are split on those who identify as democratic socialist, according to a new poll by the University of California, Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies.

COLORADO Pueblo: City Council President Mark Aliff announced the launch of a $250,000 fundraiser for an expansion of the Pueblo Shelter to accommodate pets of unhoused individuals.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: According to Yankee Magazine's Peak Fall Foliage Map, foliage in Connecticut will peak in mid to late October. Autumn colors will begin to come through in late September, with the most vibrant oranges and reds appearing in October before fading out in early to mid-November.

DELAWARE Dover: Delaware is one of the easiest states to open a bar or social club, ranking No. 4 nationally in a new study that examined alcohol laws, liquor licensing and interest in social gathering spaces.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: DC celebrated the opening of the newly renovated and renamed John R. Thompson Jr. High School on Aug. 24 following a $91 million expansion project, DC News Now reported.

FLORIDA Jacksonville: A growing number of Jacksonville City Council members say it's time to reopen an agreement struck in 2021 that commits $247 million in local gas tax money for overhauling the downtown Skyway's elevated structure so self-driving transit shuttles can travel on it. If a review of the agreement between the city and the Jacksonville Transportation Authority ends up shifting some or all of the $247 million to other purposes, it would deal a blow to expanding the NAVI system that started last year and has been slow to attract passengers.

GEORGIA Ellabell: A proposed 126-acre mixed-use development could bring new housing options and businesses to Ellabell, raising questions about how the project could change the community's landscape and character.

HAWAII Honolulu: The state Department of Health is warning the public that a dangerous batch of fentanyl-laced cocaine is circulating in the city and has led to suspected overdoses, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Boise: The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service announced they have expanded their partnership through two recreation agreements aimed at improving trail maintenance, restoring public land access and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities across the state, KTVB7 reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mailed its 5 millionth book to a child in Illinois, marking a milestone for a program that provides free books to young children across the state.

INDIANA Indianapolis: President Donald Trump has approved a major disaster declaration for parts of Indiana, opening up federal aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency as communities attempt to recover from damage caused by storms and flooding.

HIGHLIGHT: MASSACHUSETTS

Chris Marchetto reminisces about his dog, who died in January, as he stands on the Rainbow Bridge in South Dennis. RON SCHLOERB/USA TODAY NETWORK

South Dennis: A collar draped over a railing, a dog tag left behind, a painted rock adorned with a name. Cape Cod's first rainbow bridge, in South Dennis, offers pet owners a space to mourn, remember and celebrate the animals that shared their lives. The bridge opened earlier this summer at Cheryl Malone Fresh Pond Dog Park, also the first dog park on the Cape. The other closest rainbow bridge is in Attleboro that opened in 2024. Rainbow bridges are cropping up all over the country, inspired by a poem, written by a young Scottish woman, Edna Clyne-Rekhy, in 1959 after Major, her beloved Labrador retriever had died.

IOWA Des Moines: People who are homeless in Des Moines will have the option to store their belongings, including documents, in a secure locker as part of a temporary pilot program. City Council approved a contract with St. Vincent de Paul to use its facility to provide 12 gym-sized lockers with biometric locks for people who are homeless to access their personal property.

KANSAS Topeka: Topeka Public Schools has reached an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to halt transgender student policies that federal officials said broke the law.

KENTUCKY Louisville: City officials have approved revised plans for a hyperscale data center in southwest Louisville, allowing the project to expand by thousands of square feet beyond what was previously proposed, records show.

LOUISIANA Houma: A letter from a Houma museum is asking the Terrebonne Parish President to undo the council's vote and bring back a $4.5 million museum project.

MAINE Kittery: A feasibility study on the future of the former Portsmouth Naval Prison building, long ago abandoned by the Navy, may be on the horizon. This spring, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen requested $5 million in federal funding in the fiscal year 2027 appropriations legislation for a planning study. The funds would be used to determine whether "The Alcatraz of the East" could be given new life and reutilized as a "sailor campus" over a phased process, according to Shaheen's request.

MARYLAND St. Mary's County: Outbreaks of measles have been reported in three Maryland counties. In an email announcement, the Maryland Department of Health said it is declaring an outbreak of measles in St. Mary's, Carroll and Cecil counties and the identification and investigation of 14 new confirmed cases in unvaccinated Maryland residents. No public exposures have been identified in these cases.

MICHIGAN Detroit: A Wayne County program designed to reduce delinquent property taxes and spare residents from foreclosure is back. Detroit and Wayne County officials encouraged financially struggling Detroiters to apply for a local property-tax exemption ahead of a November deadline that could automatically qualify them for what's known as Pay As You Stay, or PAYS.

MINNESOTA St. Paul: Republican nominee for governor Minnesota House Speaker Lisa Demuth said if elected, she would direct her administration to "find $1 billion in savings across all agencies," in an effort to make life more affordable for Minnesotans, but she refrained from denouncing the Trump administration's burgeoning trade war with Canada that's expected to drive up costs, Minnesota Reformer reported.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: Jackson's Public Works Department would lose $8 million under Mayor John Horhn's proposed budget, even as the understaffed department struggles to respond to thousands of requests from residents.

MISSOURI Jefferson City: The Missouri Supreme Court set Sept. 2 for arguments in the appeals of two ballot measure cases, including a referendum on the state's gerrymandered congressional map. Both measures were ruled unconstitutional by a Cole County judge.

MONTANA Helena: Montana wildlife officials have reduced the state's wolf harvest limit to 300 animals for the upcoming season, down from 458 last year, after a new population estimate found just 725 wolves statewide and a sharper decline in numbers than previously believed, Mountain Journal reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: E-bike and scooter thefts in Lincoln have risen 40% from a year ago, with police reporting 98 thefts so far in 2026, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Las Vegas: The Clark County School District launched a new feeder school program spanning 18 schools to strengthen literacy and math achievement through expanded tutoring, academic support and coordinated learning pathways from pre-K through high school, KTNV reported.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Portsmouth: Gov. Kelly Ayotte and other dignitaries gathered in Portsmouth on Aug. 25 to formally cut the ribbon on a recently renovated commercial fishing pier, New Hampshire Public Radio reported. The structure, which was financed with pandemic-era stimulus money, replaces a dilapidated building from the late 1970s.

NEW JERSEY Newark: NJ Transit ended up with a $4 million loss after shuttling more than 370,000 to eight World Cup matches this summer – faring better than it does for most special events at MetLife.

NEW MEXICO Santa Teresa: A pair of New Mexico Supreme Court rulings halted air quality permit application proceedings for Project Jupiter and may slow ongoing construction at the Santa Teresa Industrial Park site.

NEW YORK Albany: Most of the formal cooperation agreements between local law enforcement agencies and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in New York were dissolved ahead of the state's ban that went into effect on Aug. 25, according to Gov. Kathy Hochul.

NORTH CAROLINA Raleigh: A new study from WalletHub ranked North Carolina among the top 10 best states for driving in 2026. In total, North Carolina ranked No. 9 in the nation for drivers.

NORTH DAKOTA Bismarck: Amid worsening drought conditions, the North Dakota Water Commission approved an additional $2 million in assistance for livestock water supplies after overwhelming demand quickly exhausted the initial funding, expanding support to producers statewide, KFYR reported.

OHIO Columbus: Ohio freshmen arriving on public university campuses this fall face a new graduation requirement: a state-mandated American civics literacy course that supporters say will combat ideological bias and critics call an intrusion into academic freedom.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: Gov. Kevin Stitt says Oklahomans should vote on whether they want a constitutional convention that could open up the state's Constitution to sweeping change. Legal experts are questioning whether Stitt has the authority to call such a vote, which hasn't been put before voters for 56 years.

OREGON Salem: The U.S. Forest Service is investing more than $15 million in Oregon's wood product industry to boost rural economics, support active forest management and promote wood and energy infrastructure.

PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia: Authorities have captured a suspect nearly two weeks after he was accused of donning a "Chucky doll"-style face mask to chase and terrorize people in the streets of Philadelphia.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: Energy ratepayers in Rhode Island will soon be getting big credits on their monthly bills. Rhode Island Energy has agreed to the latest iteration of a voluntary plan to accelerate compensation to customers for a tax liability that arose from PPL Corp.'s purchase of the company four years ago.

SOUTH CAROLINA Spartanburg: Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System is planning a major expansion on its main hospital campus near downtown Spartanburg. The system announced that it will invest $325 million in a facility dedicated to heart and vascular care – the first of its kind in the Upstate.

SOUTH DAKOTA Pierre: Several candidates for statewide legislative offices have signed a Data Center Accountability Pledge, vowing to regulate data center development if elected as part of their priorities for the 2027 legislative session, which starts in January.

TENNESSEE Nashville: The state-appointed Metro Nashville Airport Authority initiated a $7.92 million land acquisition deal that brings Nashville International Airport one step closer to realizing its intricate and costly runway renovations plan.

TEXAS Austin: Amazon has selected Austin as the site for a multibillion-dollar robotics manufacturing facility.

UTAH Cedar City: The Iron County Board of Education approved a transition to a four-day school week beginning in the 2027-28 school year, following months of public debate and survey results showing majority support among parents, KUTV reported.

VERMONT Montpelier: Police and game wardens could get the power to hand out trespassing notices to people breaking Vermont's primitive camping rules. That's according to a Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation plan to retool the state's regulations for primitive camping and put more restrictions on camp setups to better protect water sources and guard against wildfires.

VIRGINIA Sussex County: The director of the Virginia Department of Corrections says a drone drop Aug. 24 of contraband at a state prison in Sussex County is an example of "sophisticated methods" people will use to smuggle drugs and other banned products to inmates.

WASHINGTON Bremerton: An Olympic College administrator subject to an internet controversy during July and August regarding his behavior as a participant on a reality show is no longer employed by the school.

WEST VIRGINIA Buckhannon: West Virginia Wesleyan College has introduced a tuition lock guarantee that freezes tuition rates for four years while expanding scholarships and financial aid programs aimed at making a private college education more affordable, WDTV reported.

WISCONSIN Madison: The Legislature's powerful budget committee has not yet released the $10 million from a settlement with a chemical manufacturer, intended to help those who suffered from "forever chemical" contamination in Marinette and Peshtigo.

WYOMING Evanston: A judge dismissed residents' challenge to Uinta County's approval of a conditional use permit for Prometheus Hyperscale's proposed data center, ruling the petitioners lacked standing and failed to show they were adversely affected by the project, Uinta County Herald reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

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9/11

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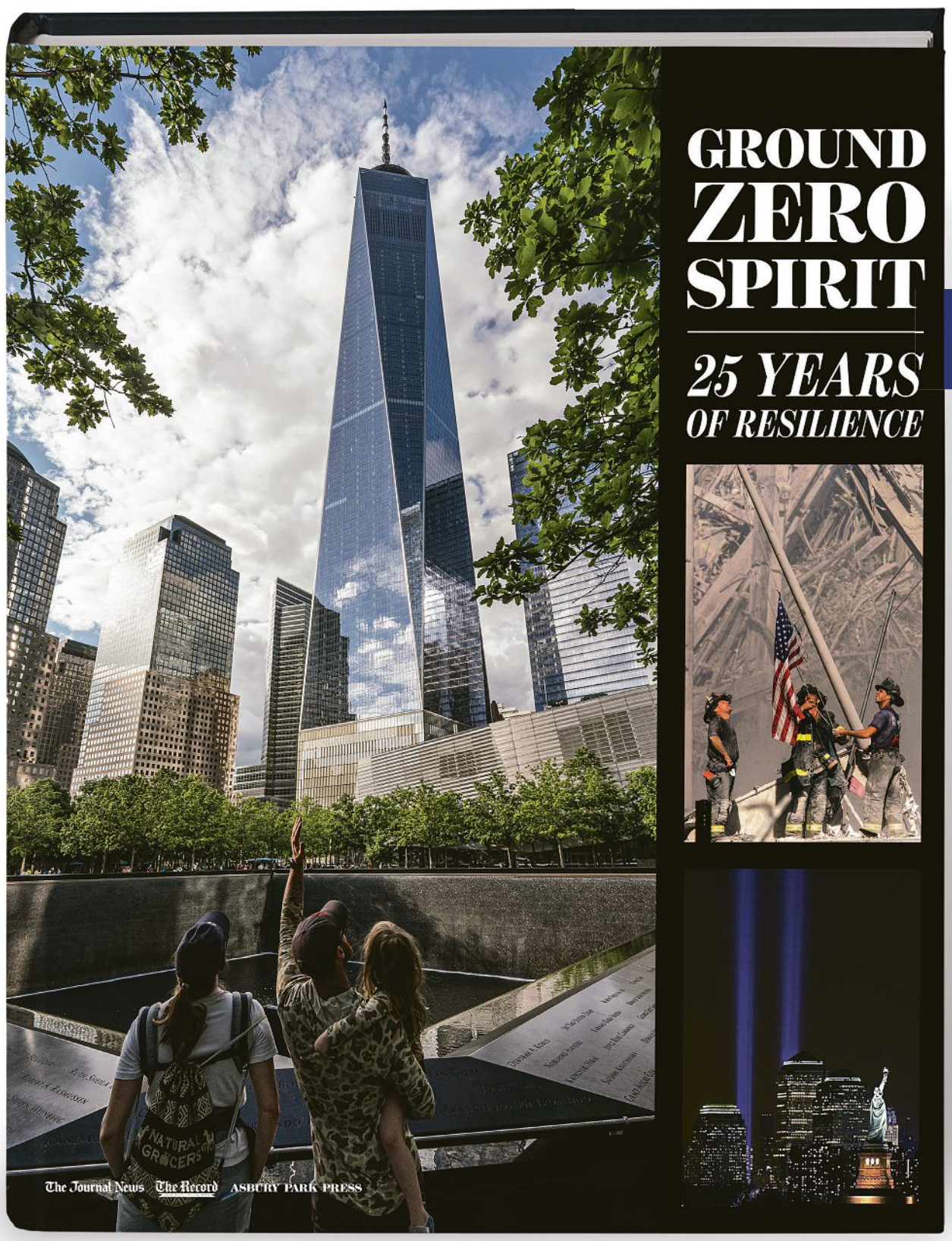

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Kickoff! Don't hit snooze

If Indiana could win a national title, why not one of these four non-Top 10 teams?

Blake Toppmeyer
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

There's no next Indiana. Let's set that straight from the start and frame this conversation properly.

To replicate Indiana's outhouse-to-penthouse rise, a longtime loser like Northwestern would need to ascend to the throne within a couple of years.

A more realistic debate would be this: Is there a team ranked outside the Top 10 in the US LBM Coaches Poll that could replicate what the 2025 Hoosiers did and go from underrated to national champions?

Until Indiana, not since 2013 Florida State (preseason No. 12) had a team won the championship that wasn't ranked in the preseason Top 10.

So, that's the framework for our exercise. Which teams not in the top 10 have the best chance – a long shot chance, perhaps, but a chance – to win the national championship?

Here are four teams to consider:

No. 13 LSU

This is why I say no "next Indiana" exists, because Lane Kiffin and LSU winning a national championship – the Tigers already have three national titles in this millennium – would not be equivalent to Indiana overcoming a doormat's history to win a national championship, two years after hiring James Madison's coach. But if we're purely looking at teams outside the Top 10 with the goods to chase a ring, LSU must be on the list. Kiffin's portal haul is tremendous, and he has proved he can blend transfers. If quarterback Sam Leavitt ignites, LSU can't be ignored.

No. 14 Southern Cal

If there was ever a time for coach Lincoln Riley to break through at USC, this is it. No team returns more starters than the Trojans, and although Dante Moore and Julian Sayin

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Southern Cal quarterback Jayden Maiava and coach Lincoln Riley bask in victory after defeating the rival UCLA Bruins on Nov. 29 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.
KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS

ANALYSIS

Judicial decisions sowing eligibility chaos

NCAA's 5-for-5 policy face federal/state rulings

Paul Myerberg
USA TODAY

Several former college football players have made unexpected returns to campus from NFL training camps following legal rulings that paved the way for veteran players to receive an additional year of eligibility, igniting a flash point during the sport's highly tumultuous offseason.

The rulings have stemmed from the recent decision by the NCAA to alter longstanding eligibility rules for current and future athletes to an age-based, five-year model that gives athletes in all sports five years to complete five seasons of play.

Occurring nearly simultaneously, courts in multiple states have broadened the new NCAA regulation to include athletes from the high school class of 2022 who had presumably finished their careers during the past academic year.

"The big picture here is that we're watching a new layer of college sports governance emerge in real time," said Ryan Regula, a partner at Snell & Wilmer who focuses on administrative law on the federal and state level.

"The NCAA used to be the sole regulator. Now conferences are asserting independent regulatory authority – adopting their own eligibility rules, filing their own lawsuits, and making enforcement decisions the NCAA can't or won't make. It's a cooperative federalism model, similar to how federal agencies and state enforcement bodies share overlapping but distinct authority in other areas of the law. The legal battles over where the NCAA's authority ends and conference authority begins are just getting started."

College coaches such as LSU's Lane Kiffin have rationalized their use of this shocking back-to-college route with a simple explanation: If we weren't doing this, someone else would.

"At the end of the day, because of these rulings, they're either going to play for you or they're going to play for someone else around the country," Kiffin said this week.

These recent developments represent the latest reshaping of rules related to eligibility and amateurism that have defined college sports for decades. But of immediate concern is the roster chaos caused by a potential influx of athletes returning to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

Most FBS programs "are operating under terms of the House settlement, where roster limits were imposed and these were settled in," said an individual with knowledge of the

See 5-FOR-5, Page 2C

LSU coach Lane Kiffin talks with quarterback Husan Longstreet at practice Aug. 18. SCOTT CLAUSE/ THE (LAFAYETTE) DAILY ADVERTISER

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Red Raiders top ground and pound units

Craig Meyer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Even as college football offenses increasingly do most of their damage through the air, there's always room for an effective, ground-based attack.

As any frustrated fan has been liable to say at some point while watching their team on a given fall Saturday, it's never a bad idea to just "*run the dang ball*."

A stable and reliable run game is important to the fortunes of any team with even a faint hope of competing for a national championship. A good group of backs, and a strong contingent of linemen blocking for them, can pick up needed yards in critical moments, control the clock and, if a unit's really having its way, break the will of an opposing defense.

Several stars at the position will be back in college for the 2026 season, a group that includes the likes of Ole Miss' Kewan Lacy, Missouri's Ahmad Hardy and Miami's Mark Fletcher Jr., just to name a few. Beyond those individual standouts, though, what teams have the best, deepest groups of runners?

The top 10 running back rooms for the 2026 season:

Ole Miss' Kewan Lacy is back after the Rebels played Miami in the College Football Playoff semifinal at the VRBO Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 8.
CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

10. Ohio State

While he's no relation to the legendary two-sport star, the Buckeyes have a Bo Jackson of their own – and he's awfully good. The former four-star recruit carried his team on the ground as a freshman last season, rushing for 1,090 yards and six touchdowns while averaging 6.1 yards per carry. For good measure, he also had 200 receiving yards and a touchdown. Fellow sophomore Isaiah West showed promise in his debut college season, too, rushing for 310 yards and averaging 5.3 yards per carry, and Florida transfer Ja'Kobi Jackson could provide a nice boost if he's able to move on from a disappointing 2025 season with the Gators.

9. Southern Cal

As Lincoln Riley enters an all-too-critical fifth season with the Trojans, he'll have an excellent group of backs to try to help propel what should be a high-powered offense. King Miller had a stellar redshirt freshman season in 2025, rushing for 972 yards and eight touchdowns, and was complemented effectively by Waymond Jordan, who added 576 yards and five touchdowns. Together, the pair combined to average 6.3 yards per carry.

8. Ole Miss

The Rebels have not only arguably the best player in the country in quarterback Trinidad Chambliss, but potentially the best running back, too. Kewan Lacy had a breakout sophomore season after transferring over from Missouri, with 24 rushing touchdowns (second most in the Football Bowl Subdivision) and 1,567 yards (third most). Transfers Makhi Frazier, who rushed for 520 yards last season at Michigan State, and Joshua Dye, who was a Football Championship Subdivision first-team All-American last season at Southern Utah, should provide some nice depth for Ole Miss in coach Pete Golding's first full season at the helm.

7. Florida

Jon Sumrall is taking over a Florida program that has gone just 29-34 over the past five seasons, but his first squad in Gainesville will have some productive runners. Jadan Baugh is one of the top returning backs in the country after putting up 1,380 total yards and 10 touchdowns last season. This year he will be joined in the backfield by a pair of big portal gets: Evan Pryor, who ran for 522 yards and averaged 6.9 yards per carry last season at Cincinnati, and London Montgomery, who put up 742 yards and seven touchdowns last season at East Carolina.

6. Miami (Florida)

Mark Fletcher Jr. was one of the catalysts for the Hurricanes' run to the national championship game last season, rushing for 507 yards and averaging 6.8 yards per carry in his team's four College Football Playoff games. He's back and not alone, either, as Miami's No. 2 and No. 3 rushers from last season are also returning to Coral Gables. CharMar Brown ran for seven touchdowns in 2025, albeit while averaging 3.9 yards per carry, and Girard Pringle Jr. could be due for a bigger role after scoring four touchdowns and averaging 6 yards per carry as a freshman last season.

5. Louisville

For all that coach Jeff Brohm added in the transfer portal, his biggest move of the offseason may have been holding on to Isaac Brown. Although injuries limited him to only nine games last season, Brown still managed to run for 884 yards on just 101 carries, an average of 8.8 yards per touch. He's one of the biggest home-run threats in the sport, too, with five of his seven touchdowns last season going for at least 50 yards. In the games he missed, the Cardinals leaned heavily on another Brown, Keyjuan (no relation), a more bruising runner who averaged 7.3 yards per carry and scored six touchdowns. Watch out for Marquise Davis, too, a former four-star recruit who averaged 5.9 yards per carry as a freshman at Missouri last season.

4. Oregon

The Ducks will be breaking in a new offensive coordinator after Will Stein left to become the head coach at Kentucky, but new play-caller Drew Mehringer will be inheriting what should be a strong run game. After promising freshman seasons, Jordon Davison and Dierre Hill Jr. are back to help out Oregon's Dante Moore-led offense. Davison was the primary back last season, rushing for a team-high 667 yards and 15 touchdowns, and Hill was wildly productive with fewer carries, racking up 656 rushing yards and 8.7 yards per carry (along with 137 receiving yards). With a year of college experience under their respective belts, both players could be primed for big seasons.

3. Texas

The Longhorns are believed to have one of the most expensive rosters in the sport. At least a chunk of that change went to building what should be one of the country's best backfields. Raleek Brown will be wearing burnt orange this season after rushing for 1,141 yards last season at Arizona State. He's not the only prominent newcomer, either, with coach Steve Sarkisian pulling in Hollywood Smothers from NC State, where he racked up 1,128 total yards last season.

2. Missouri

The Tigers may very well have the best running back in the country in Ahmad Hardy, whose 1,649 rushing yards ranked second among all FBS players last season (to say nothing of his 16 touchdowns and 6.4 yards per carry). Hardy faces some questions over his health and availability heading into the season after he was shot in May, but even beyond him, there's plenty to like about Mizzou's backfield. If Hardy misses any time or doesn't fully recover, the Tigers can lean that much more on Jamal Roberts, who rushed for 753 yards and averaged 6.1 yards per carry as a junior last season.

1. Texas Tech

While Texas Tech won't have quarterback Brendan Sorsby to lean on this season, its offense will have what might be the best collection of running backs in the country. The Red Raiders' top two rushers from last season's Big 12 championship squad are back, with Cameron Dickey and J'Koby Williams combining for 1,992 yards and 20 touchdowns in 2025. And, because it's Texas Tech, there's a high-profile transfer ready to help in Quinten Joyner, who rushed for 478 yards and averaged 7.6 yards per carry at Southern Cal in 2024 before suffering a season-ending knee injury in preseason camp last year in Lubbock.

5-for-5

Continued from Page 1C

thought process behind the implementation of the new eligibility rules, who spoke to USA TODAY Sports on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation.

"By the time this passed in June, we already had rosters largely in place from our coaches and programs."

Explaining the "five-for-five" NCAA rule change

The NCAA Division I Cabinet unanimously approved the new eligibility model in June in part to remove the redshirt and waiver bylaws that have come under increased legal scrutiny in cases challenging NCAA rules.

"While previous NCAA rules have served college sports well for a long time, we heard also loud and clear from NCAA members and student-athletes that eligibility rules should be easier to understand," NCAA President Charlie Baker said in a statement.

Under this model, an athlete's five seasons of eligibility is linked to a clock that starts upon their full-time enrollment or at the onset of the academic year following their 19th birthday.

The NCAA hoped to implement this plan beginning with the 2027 academic year. In late July, however, a federal court in Denver ruled that the application of this model must include athletes in the class of 2022 who completed their fourth seasons of eligibility this past spring.

Last week, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals granted the NCAA a stay that reversed that decision and allowed the five-for-five model to be "implemented as the Division I membership intended," wrote Scott Bearby, the NCAA's chief legal officer.

While seen as a win for the NCAA, this latest court ruling does not impact rulings that have occurred on the state level, notably the decision by a Louisiana court to grant fifth-year eligibility to more than a dozen plaintiffs.

These developments have placed the NCAA, college football and athletes on what has become familiar ground, as competing visions and legal rulings have left all parties uncertain how to approach roster management and more for this season and beyond.

"I do believe that there's chaos, but I believe that the way that conferences and schools describe the chaos is just a mischaracterization of that," said Brandon Copeland, a 10-year NFL veteran and executive director of Athletes.org, a players' association for college athletes with over 5,300 members. "I think the chaos is really the fact that there's a lack of enforceable rules, because the way in which these schools and conferences try to interact and create rules over athletes is just illegal."

Major conferences push back on NFL-to-college returnees

The two biggest conferences in the country, the Big Ten and SEC, have voiced near-unanimous opposition to athletes leaving NFL training camps to rejoin college rosters.

For the Big Ten, the prohibition extends to "football players who have signed a professional contract, were on a professional roster at any point or declared for the NFL draft as an underclassman without withdrawing," the league said in a statement.

The SEC rule covers three categories of former athletes: those who previously declared for the NFL, NBA or WNBA drafts without withdrawing; those who signed a contract with an NFL, NBA or WNBA team; and those who have been listed on an NFL, NBA or WNBA roster.

According to the league's announcement, SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey "is authorized to enforce this expectation with penalties against member institutions." Those penalties include 50% of season suspension for head coaches, 50% of that sport's annual operating budget and SEC voting privileges revoked on some matters.

Said Copeland, "I think any commonsense leadership, frankly, and I'm not going to mince my words on that, would've said, 'Hey, we're going to implement this five-for-five rule. The 2022 class is going to have issues with this. Let's just take the short-term hit, allow the whole 2022 class an eligibility waiver. And then we'll remove our ego for a year, and next year we'll have a cleaner system, potentially.' "

While a number of conference and NCAA-wide eligibility decisions have been challenged in court, recent legal rulings suggest that "conference-level governance may be viewed differently from restrictions imposed across the NCAA as a whole," said Kathleen Dion, the Education Industry Team chair and Professional and Collegiate Sports Industry team member at Robinson+Cole.

"So, while state-court injunctions against NCAA-wide eligibility restrictions certainly create legal uncertainty, conferences may believe those decisions do not automatically invalidate their own independently adopted rules. Whether that distinction ultimately holds up will depend on the particular conference, the rule being challenged, and the legal theory at issue."

Fifth-year eligibility brings chaos to Power Four rosters

More than a dozen players who had already participated in NFL training camps have entered the transfer portal, including former SMU running back TJ Harden, Ole Miss defensive lineman Zxavian Harris and former Notre Dame defensive lineman Junior Tuihalamaka.

Harden was cut by the Seattle Seahawks after playing in the team's preseason opener. Harris was waived by the New Orleans Saints in early August. Tuihalamaka has since committed to LSU.

Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman said this week that things were "too late" in the process for returnees such as Tuihalamaka "to have success in the classroom and on the field, so that's been our stance on it."

No potential returnee has raised more eyebrows than former Ole Miss tight end Dae'Quan Wright, who was waived by the Cleveland Browns after initially signing with the Philadelphia Eagles as an undrafted free agent.

Through his agent, Drew Rosenhaus, Wright has stated his intent to sign with LSU after making 39 receptions for 635 yards during the 2025 season. According to the recent Louisiana court ruling, any player looking to return to college must "terminate any such (NFL) contract and repay any money they have received."

As noted by Kiffin, the personnel arms race triggered by changes related to name, image and likeness (NIL) and the transfer portal has created a keeping-up-with-the-Joneses mindset among Power Four teams with the goal of competing for national championships and the financial wherewithal to do so.

The cost of adding these players would be significant, an individual in the college landscape told USA TODAY Sports. Whether it's a "state-school scholarship or a private institution such as Stanford, Notre Dame, Duke or Northwestern or many others, there's still real costs affixed to those roster spots," they said.

And these potential additions could come at an additional cost. FBS teams are subject to a 105-player roster cap; programs filled available spots during this winter's two-week transfer window and traditional signing period, meaning any newcomers could force coaches to cut current players to make roster space.

Thanks to NFL training camps and preseason play, the assumption is the potential returnees would be physically ready to compete. But there's an overhanging question of how quickly these players can acclimate themselves to new styles and playbooks, even if some players – such as Wright or former James Madison linebacker Trent Hendrick, who recently committed to his former coach Bob Chesney at UCLA – would bring along a familiarity with the existing schemes.

For now, the door is closing on former athletes who were not included in previously ruled cases on the state level, such as the case in Louisiana.

"The athletes still have legal options, but the path just got harder," said Regula. "The practical problem is time. The season starts in days. Getting a (temporary restraining order) against a conference requires finding a court willing to act on an emergency basis against a different defendant than the one already enjoined. It's doable – we've seen courts move fast in this space – but it's another lawsuit, another set of briefing, and another judge."

Contributing: John Brice

Transfers shake up Top 25 QB rankings

Erick Smith
USA TODAY

No position in college football is more important than quarterback. Yet the position has incredible turnover with players departing for the NFL or heading to the transfer portal in the effort to level up at a bigger program or in search of more playing time.

The circumstances create fluidity every season, and the benefit of having a returning starter or the arrival of an experienced veteran can make or break a team. It should then be no surprise that all but one of the top 25 best quarterbacks fit into one of those categories.

Nineteen of the group selected by voters at USA TODAY Sports are in at least their second year at their school with just one yet to be a starter. The other six members of the list are transfers with significant starting experience at their previous stops.

Notre Dame quarterback CJ Carr, throwing Oct. 11 against NC State at Notre Dame Stadium, finished the 2025 season with 2,741 yards and 24 TDs.
MICHAEL CLUBB/SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE

25. Keelon Russell, Alabama

Recently named the starter by Kalen DeBoer, the former five-star recruit has the electric physical skills that were just too hard to keep off the field. There are sure to be growing pains after he sat out in his first season in Tuscaloosa. By the end of the season, he could be much higher on the list.

24. Conner Weigman, Houston

Weigman is the Big 12's leading returner in completion percentage (65.2%) after guiding the Cougars to 10 wins last season. What separates him is his instincts, trusting his arm while knowing when to use his legs. His 36 total touchdowns – 25 passing and 11 running – were top 10 in the country. Staying healthy and playing a full season was rewarding, and he still has room to get better if he can cut down the interceptions.

23. Rocco Becht, Penn State

Becht is one of the most experienced quarterbacks in the country with almost 40 starts and 64 touchdown passes in his three years as a starter at Iowa State. His arrival in State College to follow coach Matt Campbell is significant due to his familiarity with the scheme and should help the transition for the Nittany Lions.

22. CJ Bailey, NC State

If experience matters, the Wolfpack certainly have it. Bailey has amassed over 5,500 career passing yards and 42 TD throws in his more than 20 starts across two seasons running the attack. His size at 6-foot-6 and command of the Wolfpack offense isn't in question, but whether the win total improves largely hinges on the other side of the ball.

21. Byrum Brown, Auburn

Another quarterback who followed his coach to a new school, Brown sticks with Tigers coach Alex Golesh to the Plains from South Florida. Brown excelled as one of the nation's top Group of Five quarterbacks, rushing for more than 1,000 yards last season. He's a skilled deep-shot passer, too, and Golesh's up-tempo spread offense is proved to work in the SEC from his time at Tennessee.

20. LaNorris Sellers, South Carolina

Sellers entered last year with tons of hype, but his performance dropped off in his second season as a starter. That's not entirely his fault. The Gamecocks were awful. They hired a new offensive coordinator, Kendal Briles, to get Sellers back on track. It's tough to know what to expect from Sellers. He requires better pass protection and support. Nobody would dispute he's talented. Some NFL draft evaluators believe he'll become a first-round selection.

19. Bear Bachmeier, BYU

You wouldn't have guessed Bachmeier was thrust as BYU's starter as a true freshman last year without the benefit of spring practice. He surpassed expectations, throwing for 3,033 yards and rushing for 527 yards with 26 total touchdowns as the Cougars reached the Big 12 title game. Bachmeier plays with a physical style that relishes contact. His throwing consistency needs improvement, but he can become one of the best quarterbacks in the country with further development.

18. Jaron-Keawe Sagapolutele, Cal

Sagapolutele might just be the guy nobody is talking about enough, not just around the ACC but in the entire country. He threw for 3,454 yards and 18 scores as a freshman last year, and new Bears coach Tosh Lupoi convinced him to stay in Berkeley. The priority now is to give him better protection and more consistent ground support so that he can continue to flourish and bring more wins to Cal.

17. Devon Dampier, Utah

Utah led the Big 12 with 41.3 points per game (fourth nationally) thanks to the dynamic playmaking of Dampier. A transfer from New Mexico, his first season in Salt Lake City saw him throw for 2,490 yards and 24 touchdowns, while adding 835 rushing yards and 10 scores on the ground. Dampier will again carry the load for the Utes as they begin a new era under first-year coach Morgan Scalley and the arrival of offensive coordinator Kevin McGiven.

16. Noah Fifita, Arizona

Fifita has started 34 of his 40 contests at Arizona and bounced back from a rough 2024 season by throwing for a career-high 3,228 yards and 29 touchdowns last year. Adding a running ability to his repertoire was a big plus, finally forcing defenses to pay attention to his legs. He enters the 2026 season as the nation's active career passing touchdown leader with 73, setting him up for a big finish with the Wildcats.

15. Demond Williams, Washington

Williams almost wasn't with the Huskies after he reversed course from a planned transfer this winter. He completed 69.5% of his attempts for 3,065 yards and 28 scores in 2025 and is poised to become a national name if the Huskies can improve their performances against elite competition. Washington managed just 27 combined points in losses to Ohio State, Michigan and Oregon.

14. Marcel Reed, Texas A&M

Reed nicknamed himself the "Gingerbread Man." Why? Because, you can't catch him. A multi-sport star in high school, he attacks defenses with his legs and his arm. His struggles came against Texas A&M's toughest competition, and his sophomore season ended after a red-zone interception in a College Football Playoff loss to Miami. He's vowed to cut down on his 12 interceptions. If he makes good on that pledge, he possesses abilities to be a top-tier SEC quarterback.

13. Drew Mestemaker, Oklahoma State

Mestemaker has already had an unexpected career, rising from a walk-on to undeniable star for North Texas as a redshirt freshman in 2025. He led the country in passing yards (4,379), yards per game (312.8) and yards per pass attempt (9.46). With Mean Green coach Eric Morris moving to Stillwater after the season, Mestemaker joined him and brings big expectations to lead an offense that needed a total rebuild.

12. Kevin Jennings, SMU

Entering his third season as the Mustangs' full-time starter with 54 career TD passes, Jennings hopes this year to check a couple of more boxes on his collegiate résumé. Namely, getting the team back to the conference title game as he did in 2024 and win it this time, and then subsequently lead the Ponies deeper into the playoff. He does have 26 career interceptions, in part a function of the team's pass-heavy system, but he'll need to cut down on the giveaways.

11. Josh Hoover, Indiana

Hoover becomes the third consecutive transfer to grab the reins of the Indiana offense since Curt Cignetti's arrival in Bloomington. He had a productive run at TCU with 71 touchdowns passes while leading the Horned Frogs to consecutive nine-win seasons. The one catch is turnovers. Hoover was in a high-volume system but still tossed 24 interceptions the past two years, the majority coming on the road.

10. John Mateer, Oklahoma

Who is the real John Mateer? He was dynamite through four games in his first season at Oklahoma after arriving from Washington State. Then, he broke his thumb in a win against Auburn. He gutsily rushed back from the injury, but his performance dropped. That dip in production makes you wonder whether last September was a mirage, or will he be healthy and productive this season? Mateer battles an interception bug, but he's also packed with dual-threat and big-play abilities.

9. Jayden Maiava, Southern Cal

Maiava gets lost in the shuffle when discussing the best quarterbacks in the Big Ten but has an opportunity to climb this list if USC can leap back into the playoff picture. The former UNLV transfer will have plenty to work with thanks to more transfer help and the addition of one of the year's top recruiting classes.

8. Sam Leavitt, LSU

After a breakout campaign in 2024, when Arizona State made the playoff, Leavitt's progression stalled last year during a season cut short by a foot injury. Now, he must prove he has recovered from his injury and is ready for an uptick in competition. The SEC is a different beast than the Big 12, but Leavitt's got a coach in Lane Kiffin and a coordinator in Charlie Weis Jr. who can help him handle it.

7. Gunner Stockton, Georgia

Not a prototype quarterback in terms of size, Stockton is a gamer, a winner, clutch and has a really good arm. He showed all of those qualities on one play last season when he fired a fourth-down touchdown dart against Tennessee, allowing Georgia to survive an upset scare. Stockton elevates in the big games. He outplayed Arch Manning in their head-to-head duel last November. More will be on his shoulders with a young receiving corps but he seems ready to carry load.

6. Darian Mensah, Miami (Florida)

Miami is the third stop in Mensah's career after starting at Tulane and then playing last season for Duke. He led the Blue Devils to the ACC title while throwing for almost 4,000 yards and 34 touchdowns before making the scrutinized decision to switch to a school in conference. Mensah will be under the proverbial microscope with the Hurricanes having national championship goals, but he has the mindset and talent to handle the pressure.

5. Arch Manning, Texas

Now that Manning has been a starter for a full season, maybe his every movement and fashion choices won't be scrutinized to the nth degree. Ah, who are we kidding? After a slow start, Manning finished last season much better. His abilities were on full display in a Citrus Bowl win against Michigan. He's an excellent runner who needs more consistency as a passer, but Texas added weapons around him. Perhaps, all that hype last summer was just a year too soon.

4. Trinidad Chambliss, Ole Miss

He's a proven star who led the Rebels to the College Football Playoff semifinals, including a defeat of Georgia in the quarterfinals that wouldn't have been possible without Chambliss' dazzling performance. A sixth-year player, he's no longer the unknown underdog who came to Ole Miss as a Division II transfer. He's become one of college football's biggest stars, a charismatic dual threat with Heisman Trophy potential.

3. CJ Carr, Notre Dame

A Notre Dame quarterback living up to high expectations? That hasn't always been the case with heralded players in the past but Carr more than exceeded his hype in his first season as starter. He threw for 2,741 yards and 24 touchdowns in a season that ended with disappointment when the Fighting Irish were not selected to the playoff. Losing Jeremiyah Love will put more on Carr's plate. He seems ready for the challenge.

2. Julian Sayin, Ohio State

Maybe the biggest hurdle to Sayin claiming the Heisman Trophy is his teammate, wide receiver Jeremiah Smith, who is widely seen as the best pound-for-pound player in the country. To his credit, Sayin is coming off a year with 3,610 yards and 32 touchdowns while averaging 9.2 yards per attempt. There's every reason to think he'll take another step forward in 2026 under new offensive coordinator Arthur Smith.

1. Dante Moore, Oregon

Moore is seen as maybe the nation's top overall draft prospect after a 2025 season that saw him throw for 30 scores in leading the Ducks to the playoff semifinals. He'll have to prove he can handle Indiana after tossing three interceptions in two losses to the Hoosiers.

Toppmeyer

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magnetize a lot of the hype surrounding Big Ten quarterbacks, USC's Jayden Maiava is a star, too. USC's schedule is loaded – it includes Ohio State, Oregon and Indiana – but Riley should be able to compete with this roster. If he can't, maybe he's not the guy the Trojans thought they were getting.

No. 12 Texas Tech

The Brendan Sorsby saga overshadowed that Texas Tech remains the front-runner in the Big 12. Conference peers will struggle to score against a defense with a disruptive front and linebacker Ben Roberts in the middle of it all. The schedule is a breeze – No. 24 Houston is the only preseason ranked opponent – so the Red Raiders are a good bet for the College Football Playoff. What do they achieve if they get there? Last season, they got shut out in a whimpering playoff loss. To be championship contenders, Will Hammond must become a better quarterback than Texas Tech thought he would be. Otherwise, why did it try so hard to make a gambling addict its starter? If Hammond overdelivers, then Texas Tech is underrated.

No. 19 Washington

From No. 19 to champions? Pretty extreme, right? Well, not for 2025 Indiana, and here's another Big Ten team lurking on the 19-line with an ace quarterback in Demond Williams Jr. He's got an offensive line full of familiar faces in front of him. There is good reason for skepticism that Washington will ascend past last year's 9-4 record, particularly because it must replace several defensive starters. But, the cliché rings true that if you've got a quarterback, you've got a chance, and Washington has a quarterback.

Best groups led by 'Wide Receiver U'

John Leuzzi and Austin Curtright
USA TODAY NETWORK

Few programs in college football can match the wide receiver depth and talent of its true College Football Playoff contenders.

Ohio State, commonly referred to as "Wide Receiver U" for its pipeline to the NFL, certainly meets that bill. The Buckeyes, the top-ranked team in the preseason US LBM Coaches Poll, enter the 2026 college football season with one of the nation's top receiving groups, headlined by All-American Jeremiah Smith.

In the SEC, Arch Manning has a pair of weapons at his disposal in Cam Coleman and Ryan Wingo as Texas looks for its first SEC title and first college football championship since 2005.

There are also some wide receiver corps – and individual receivers – who are looking to showcase a full offseason's worth of work in ahead of the college football season.

So who has the top receiver groups in 2026? USA TODAY Sports ranked the top units:

Ohio State wide receiver Brandon Inniss (11) celebrates a touchdown catch by wide receiver Jeremiah Smith during the first half of their 2024 game against Akron at Ohio Stadium. ADAM CAIRNS/THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

1. Ohio State

Smith has been everything as advertised in his two seasons at Ohio State.

He enters his junior season with 2,558 receiving yards and 27 touchdowns on 163 catches, the most receiving yards and scoring receptions by any Big Ten receiver in their first two seasons. No other Football Bowl Subdivision receiver has more receiving yards or touchdowns since the start of the 2024 season. While his production dipped slightly last year, he still is the most dangerous person on the field.

He's the headliner of the Buckeyes wide receiver corps this season, with Brandon Inniss moving into a larger role in the rotation, as Carnell Tate is now in the NFL with the Tennessee Titans. Inniss had 50 catches and four touchdowns over the last two seasons.

2. Texas

Texas bolstered its receiving corps by landing the top wide receiver in the portal with Auburn transfer Cam Coleman. In the process, the Longhorns lost Arch Manning's roommate, Parker Livingstone, who caught 29 passes for 516 yards with six touchdowns last season, to Red River rival Oklahoma.

Coleman, a serious deep threat who can bring in high catches at 6-foot-3, has combined for 1,306 yards and 13 touchdowns on 93 receptions over the past two seasons. He led all SEC receivers with 14 contested catches last season, per ESPN Research, and finished with 56 receptions for 708 yards and five touchdowns while playing with three quarterbacks.

In Austin this season, Coleman will mirror the sidelines with Ryan Wingo, Manning's go-to target from a season ago. Wingo finished with a team-high 834 receiving yards and seven touchdowns on 54 receptions last season.

3. Miami (Florida)

Toney broke onto the scene as a true freshman, helping the Hurricanes reach the College Football Playoff national championship game. What makes Toney elusive and a headache for opposing defensive coordinators is his speed and ability to reel in tough catches despite being 5-foot-9.

Oh, and he's a multi-skilled player – who can also be used as a quarterback, as he also completed 4 of 7 passes for 82 yards and two touchdowns – for the Hurricanes too, finishing with 1,622 all-purpose yards last season while recording eight games of at least 100 all-purpose yards. He had five games of at least 100 receiving yards.

This past offseason, Mario Cristobal and company added Duke transfer Cooper Barkate to the fold to replace the production of Keelan Marion from last season's CFP national runner-up team. Barkate, a 6-foot-1 receiver who started his career in the Ivy League at Harvard, finished with 1,106 yards and seven touchdowns last season for the Blue Devils and is reuniting with quarterback Darian Mensah, who is also at Miami after leaving Duke.

4. Indiana

Indiana lost a pair of experienced receivers in Omar Cooper Jr. and Elijah Sarratt to the NFL draft in the offseason but returned contested-catch specialist Charlie Becker while adding Michigan State transfer Nick Marsh, one of the top available receivers in the transfer portal.

Becker emerged as one of Indiana's top receivers down the stretch last season, with 404 of his 679 receiving yards coming in the Hoosiers' final six games. The No. 3 target from last season will step into a bigger role in 2026 and is poised for a huge breakout campaign.

Marsh, meanwhile, was productive in his first two seasons at Michigan State despite his former program having one of the worst quarterback situations in the Big Ten. The 6-foot-3, 213-pound receiver caught 59 passes for 662 yards with six touchdowns last season and is expected to benefit nicely from an upgrade in quarterback with TCU transfer Josh Hoover.

Indiana also added Tulane transfer Shazz Preston, who had 724 receiving yards with four touchdowns while leading the team in receiving. Sophomore Davion Chandler has impressed in camp, too. The Hoosiers have to prove it, but on paper they reloaded the room quite well.

5. Oregon

Former five-star recruit Evan Stewart may not even start for Oregon in 2026, which shows how deep the Ducks' wide receivers room is.

Oregon will be led by a pair of sophomores in Dakorien Moore and Jeremiah McClellan, both of whom had over 500 receiving yards last season as true freshmen.

They'll be joined by UAB transfer Iverson Hooks, who had 927 receiving yards with seven touchdowns for the Blazers.

Stewart missed the entire 2025 season due to a knee injury after catching 48 passes for 613 yards and five touchdowns in 2024, and he is hoping to return to his previous form in 2026.

Regardless, Oregon has a four-receiver corps that stacks up against any in the country.

WEATHER

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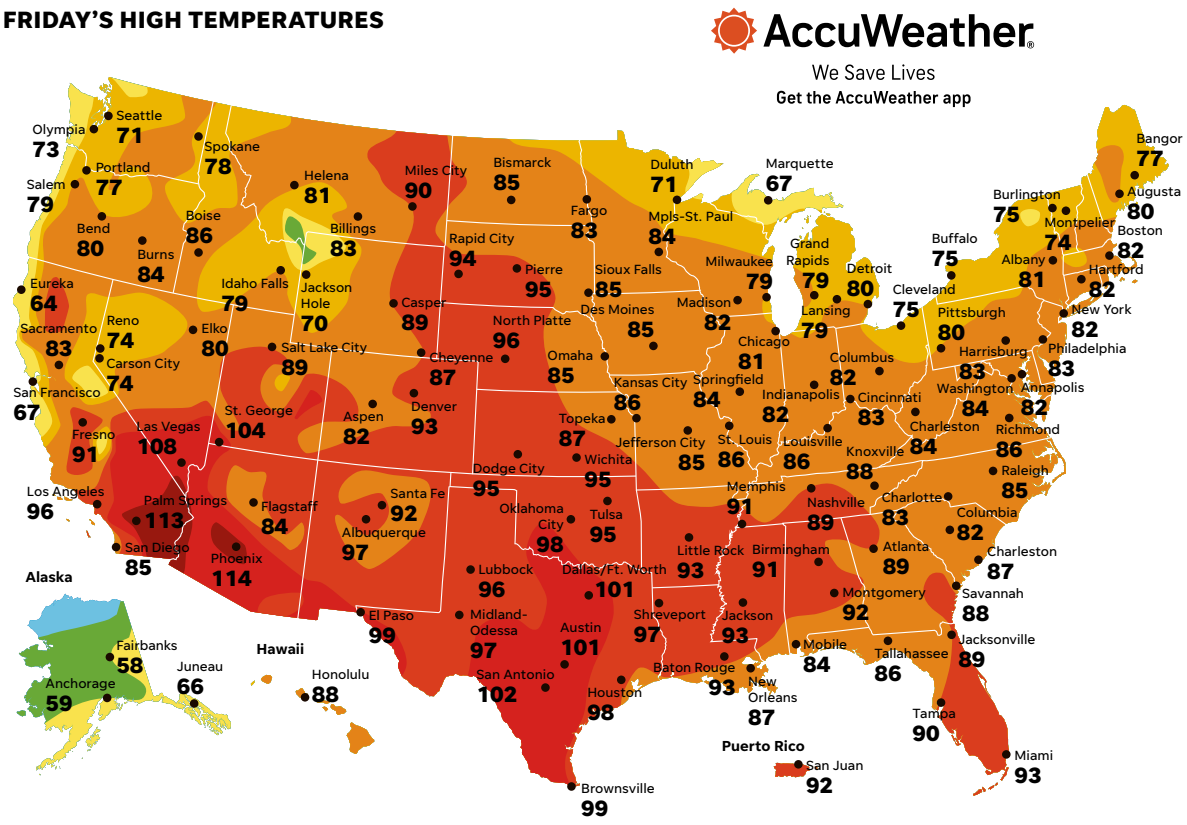
WEEKEND FORECAST

A cooling trend will slowly expand over the **West** from Friday to this weekend, beginning in the **Northwest**. As the heat dome breaks down in the **West**, spotty storms may become more widespread in nature. Still, the wildfire risk will continue. The heat dome will reorganize over the **Plains** this weekend, before settling to the **Southeast**, **Ohio Valley** and **mid-Atlantic** regions next week. Rounds of drenching showers and gusty thunderstorms will develop from the northern part of the **Plains** to the **Midwest**. The **Atlantic coast** will dry out this weekend after downpours linger for a time on Friday. In the tropics, waves from distant storms will reach the **California** coast. Downpours and gusty squalls will approach the northeast Caribbean from the east.

FRIDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



U.S. CITIES

	FRI	SAT
Albany, N.Y.	81/56t	79/56s
Albuquerque	97/69s	95/67t
Amarillo, Texas	94/71pc	99/72pc
Anchorage, Alaska	59/53r	64/47pc
Atlantic City, N.J.	80/70t	79/68pc
Augusta, Ga.	84/72t	86/70t
Austin, Texas	101/75t	100/77s
Baton Rouge, La.	93/73t	93/73t
Billings, Mont.	83/64t	77/56pc
Birmingham, Ala.	91/69t	92/72t
Bismarck, N.D.	85/65t	87/65t
Boise, Idaho	86/65pc	83/52s
Buffalo, N.Y.	75/55pc	76/59pc
Burlington, Vt.	75/52sh	81/59s
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	82/62s	77/65pc
Charleston, S.C.	87/74t	85/73t
Charleston, W.Va.	84/61t	86/62pc
Cheyenne, Wyo.	87/61pc	87/60pc
Cincinnati	83/62s	84/65pc
Cleveland	75/56pc	79/61pc
Columbia, S.C.	82/72t	86/71t
Columbus, Ohio	82/59s	84/63pc
Corpus Christi, Texas	101/77t	97/78s
Daytona Beach, Fla.	90/74t	89/76t
Des Moines, Iowa	85/67s	86/74c
Duluth, Minn.	71/56c	74/60t
Durham, N.C.	84/70t	85/68t
El Paso, Texas	99/76s	102/75s
Fairbanks, Alaska	58/47sh	52/44sh
Flagstaff, Ariz.	84/52s	79/55t
Fargo, N.D.	83/67pc	87/66t
Fort Myers, Fla.	94/76t	93/77t
Fort Wayne, Ind.	81/56s	80/62pc
Fresno, Calif.	91/69pc	95/63s
Green Bay, Wis.	77/61pc	75/64t
Harrisburg, Pa.	83/65t	85/65s
Hartford, Conn.	82/61t	83/57pc
Indianapolis	82/61s	85/66pc
Jackson, Miss.	93/70t	95/73t
Jacksonville, Fla.	89/74t	88/73t
Jefferson City, Mo.	85/61s	89/68pc
Kansas City	86/67s	92/73pc
Key West, Fla.	91/83t	90/82t
Knoxville, Tenn.	88/67t	90/69pc
Lincoln, Neb.	85/68s	93/75w
Little Rock, Ark.	93/68s	92/67s
Louisville, Ky.	86/67s	89/68s
Manchester, N.H.	82/58t	82/56s
Memphis, Tenn.	91/70s	93/73s
Milwaukee	79/65s	80/68t
Mobile, Ala.	84/73t	88/74t
Montgomery, Ala.	92/71t	92/73t
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	83/73t	84/74t
Nags Head, N.C.	82/73t	81/74t
Nashville, Tenn.	89/67s	92/69s
Newark, N.J.	83/68t	84/68c
Norfolk, Va.	84/73t	82/73t
Oakland, Calif.	69/58pc	69/57pc
Oklahoma City	98/69s	101/74s
Omaha, Neb.	85/69pc	94/75w
Palm Springs, Calif.	113/88s	111/83s
Pittsburgh	80/58t	81/59s
Portland, Maine	78/57t	78/57pc
Portland, Ore.	77/57c	72/54pc
Providence, R.I.	81/64t	80/60pc
Raleigh, N.C.	85/71t	86/71t
Rapid City, S.D.	94/63t	94/60t
Reno, Nev.	74/57pc	84/53s
Richmond, Va.	86/68t	84/68t
Rochester, N.Y.	73/52sh	78/58pc
Sacramento, Calif.	83/57pc	85/55s
San Antonio	102/79t	99/78s
San Jose, Calif.	76/57pc	75/57pc
Savannah, Ga.	88/73t	85/74t
Shreveport, La.	97/75t	98/73s
Sioux Falls, S.D.	85/67t	91/70t
South Bend, Ind.	80/58s	81/65pc
Spokane, Wash.	78/54h	72/46s
Springfield, Mo.	87/65s	91/69s
Springfield, Ill.	84/60s	85/65pc
St. Louis	86/67s	89/70pc
Syracuse, N.Y.	76/53pc	78/57pc
Tallahassee, Fla.	86/74t	86/73t
Tampa, Fla.	90/78t	92/78t
Topeka, Kan.	87/68s	94/76pc
Tucson, Ariz.	107/83t	102/80t
Tulsa, Okla.	95/72s	100/78s
Wichita, Kan.	95/70s	101/74pc
Wilmington, Del.	82/66t	84/66pc
Winston-Salem, N.C.	83/69t	84/69t

pc Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **c** Cloudy **t** Thunderstorms **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow

Below 10 | 10s | 20s | 30s | 40s | 50s | 60s | 70s | 80s | 90s | 100s | 110+

EXTREMES

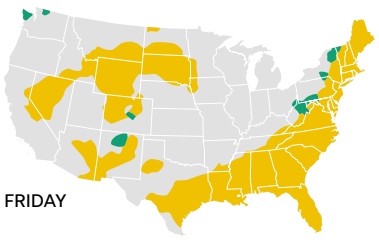
Note: For contiguous 48 states through Wednesday

HOTTEST: 120° Death Valley, Calif.

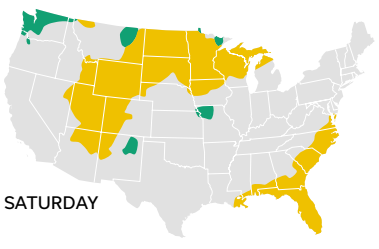
COLDEST: 35° Leadville, Colo.

PRECIPITATION FORECAST

T-storms | Rain | Snow | Ice/mix

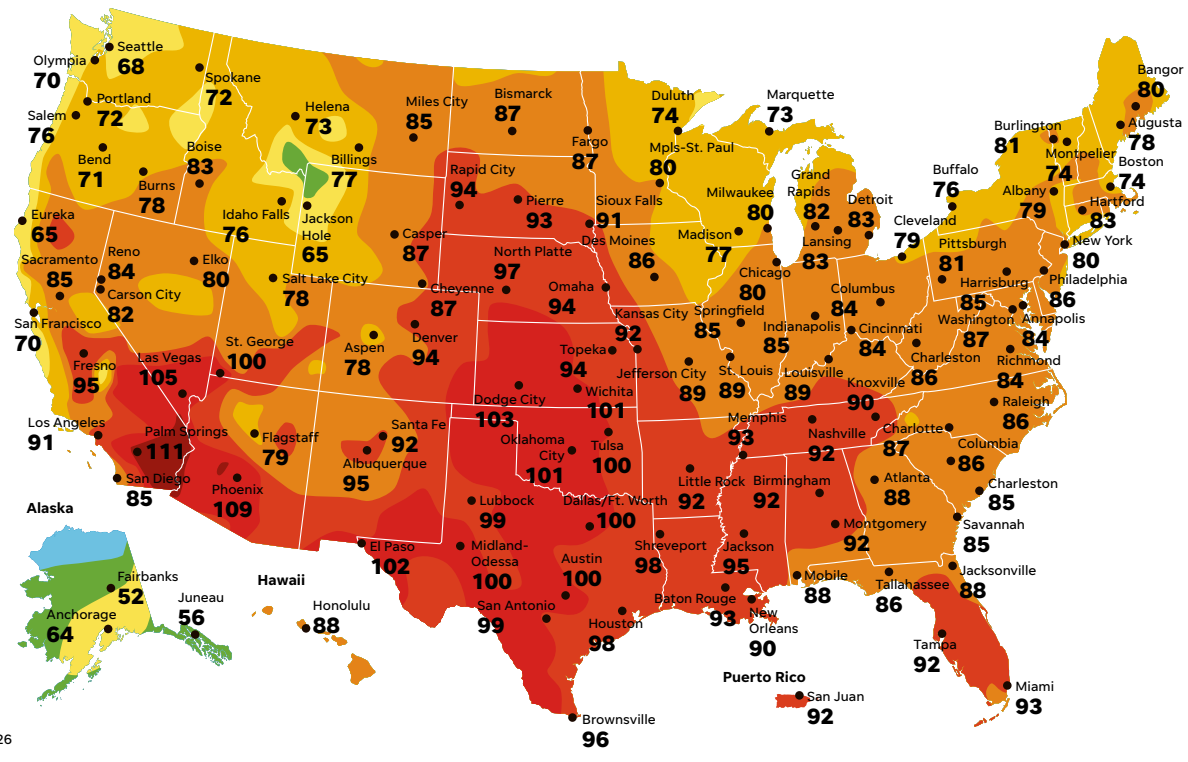


FRIDAY



SATURDAY

SATURDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather Inc.** ©2026

Gary Woodland proudly fights back to finale

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

Gary Woodland signs autographs Aug. 26 during a practice round prior to the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta. KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES

ATLANTA – Seven years ago, Gary Woodland was the reigning U.S. Open champion and a fixture at East Lake Golf Club. This week, he had to use GPS for directions.

When a reporter asked him whether he needed help finding the place, Woodland smiled. "I went the wrong way this morning, so yes," he said.

The joke was easy. The journey was anything but.

Seven years had passed since Woodland finished in the top 30 of the FedExCup standings and qualified for the season-ending Tour Championship. A lot had changed in those seven years, including a redesign of the layout that made the course appear foreign to him. But that's not all that had changed.

In September 2023, Woodland, 42, had surgery to remove a baseball-sized tumor from his brain. Before the operation, he wrote letters to each of his three kids in case he didn't make it. Making it to East Lake? It has been the least of his concerns.

He rolled into the parking lot Aug. 24 in his courtesy car after a season that has once seemed almost impossible to imagine. He won the Texas Children's Houston Open in March, recorded six top-10 finishes, then delivered a clutch T-4 finish Sunday at the BMW Championship to secure a spot in Atlanta.

"It's something that looked a long ways away to start the year," he said. "I'm proud of the way I fought. I'm proud to be here."

Woodland's battle didn't end when he left the operating room. After the brain surgery came another fight, a silent battle that was harder to explain because it couldn't be seen on an MRI. In March, just weeks before his victory, Woodland revealed he was battling post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Something remarkable happened when he went public with his latest fight.

"When it came out that I was having brain surgery, I don't know how many texts I got. Let's just say I got a hundred," he said. "When I came out that I'm battling PTSD, I got thousands."

People could understand the brain surgery from a distance. But they understood his invisible battle because they were fighting their own battles, too. Woodland began receiving messages from strangers that were struggling with things they hadn't been able to tell another soul. Some thanked him for being willing to say out loud what they were experiencing themselves.

"If I can come out and ask for help and talk about it, then they've gotten help too," Woodland said.

That led to an important realization: He wasn't playing for himself anymore.

Asking for help has been one of the hardest things he had done. What Woodland discovered on the other side was almost the opposite of what he feared. "It's amazing when you ask for help how many people actually want to help," he said.

Woodland traded worries for a win, and here he is. But nothing about his comeback has been neat, where everything is suddenly fine. His best days are 10's, and he appreciates them more. But the bad days? Still 1's.

"I struggle sometimes because it's a massive drop now from 10 to 1," he said. "So, when I get off, it feels like the end of the world."

The 1 days still "suck." He still has to fight. But he no longer has to pretend otherwise. "I got a lot of relief from that. I still battle the same things now that I was battling then, but I feel the love and support; I don't feel like I'm hiding anything."

Tommy Fleetwood, one of Woodland's fellow competitors and the defending FedExCup champion, understands what his season represents. "For him to have a great year," he said, "it's one of those inspirational stories that I'm sure touches so many people but also has an impact on a lot of people as well and their individual journeys."

Woodland isn't treating this week as a sentimental victory lap. The Tour Championship's format has changed since his last appearance – good riddance to the former staggered-start scoring format in which Scottie Scheffler, the FedExCup leader before the reset, would have started at 10 under – and now the player in the 30-man field with the lowest 72-hole score wins. Having continually defied the odds, Woodland likes his chances.

"You're spotting Scottie six or seven shots. We have a hard enough time not spotting him any shots," Woodland said.

"I'm showing up here to win, there's no doubt about it. I'm not here as a celebratory tour because I'm finishing top 30. I'm here playing with a purpose."

That purpose reaches far beyond golf. A few weeks ago, during the FedEx St. Jude Championship in Memphis, Woodland met an 11-year-old from New Zealand with an inoperable brain tumor. From Wednesday through Sunday, he walked every hole with Woodland.

"I owe it to him," Woodland said.

At first, he thought the fight was about him. Now he knows it isn't. "This is way bigger than me. I owe it to everyone else that is struggling."

"There's a lot of days where I don't want to do it," he added. "There's a lot of days I don't want to fight."

But he does. Because that kid who dreamed of becoming a professional athlete is still inside him. Because his family sacrificed for that. And because he refuses to let something beyond his control decide how his story ends.

Seven years after his last trip to the Tour Championship, Woodland found his way back. This time he didn't have to find the road alone.

American men, women vie for Open titles

Scooby Axson
USA TODAY

Carlos Alcaraz reacts during the mixed doubles match with Serena Williams against Lloyd Glasspool and Erin Routliffe. MIKE FREY/IMAGN IMAGES

Every year since 2003, the big question entering Grand Slam tournaments is whether an American man will finally win on tennis' biggest stages.

When tennis was dominated by Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, few American men even reached a Grand Slam final, let alone won one. That's also held true in recent years, with Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz dominating the headlines and the competition. But Sinner is injured and will not compete in New York, while Alcaraz returns to singles play after almost a four-month absence.

The year's final Grand Slam is a chance for redemption for the Americans, as seven players from the United States are ranked in the top 50.

Even though Aryna Sabalenka is the two-time defending women's champion, she has plenty of competition. Not only will Americans such as Coco Gauff, Jessica Pegula and Amanda Anisimova have a say in that, but the contingent from Czechia, with seven ranked in the Top 50, might also make some noise.

Men

● **Carlos Alcaraz:** The defending Open champion is a threat to win any tournament he enters. The problem is he has missed the last two Grand Slam events and the entire hardcourt season. But his performance in the mixed doubles tournament with Serena Williams shows he is still a force to be reckoned with, especially if his troublesome wrist can withstand the force of two weeks of serves and returns.

● **Ben Shelton:** The big question is which version of him will show up. The one who blitzed through Montreal or the one who looked tired in Cincinnati and was ousted in the first round? Shelton and Frances Tiafoe, who got to the final in Cincinnati, may give U.S. men their best chance in a while for ultimate glory.

● **Alexander Zverev:** Confidence is a key component, and Zverev has loads of it after his French Open triumph. His improved service game will be the key if he plans on making any noise.

Arthur Fils: The 22-year-old from France has been slowly climbing the rankings and will enter knocking on the door of the top 10. His performance in Cincinnati, where he won his first ATP Masters 1000 title, put the entire tour on notice and he could be pushing to form a new Big Three with Alcaraz and Sinner, who is injured and won't play.

● **Taylor Fritz:** A 2024 US Open finalist, Fritz has the forehand and serve to compete with any of the top players, so if he gets a favorable draw, he can do more than salvage his 2026 season (he hasn't gotten past the fourth round at any Grand Slam this year).

Women

● **Aryna Sabalenka:** She has not won a Grand Slam event this year. She is hanging on to her No. 1 ranking by a thread. Anything less than a deep run, and she could lose her nearly 100 straight weeks run at the top.

● **Elena Rybakina:** The woman threatening to snatch that No. 1 ranking from Sabalenka already has a hard-court Grand Slam title this year, having won the Australian Open. The caveat is that she has never advanced past the fourth round at the US Open.

● **Coco Gauff:** Gauff is due for a championship run in New York. Since winning the title in 2023, she has been beaten in the fourth round in each of the last two tournaments. But strong finishes at the Miami Open and in Toronto have her primed for another strong showing, especially if her forehand and serve cooperate.

● **Iga Swiatek:** Known more for her clay-court prowess, the 2022 US Open champ beat Rybakina in the Montreal final and could be the favorite to dethrone Sabalenka. The former No. 1 is attempting to keep alive her streak of winning at least one Grand Slam title, which she has done in each of the prior four years.

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El Tribunal Eclesiástico de Manizales, Caldas Colombia requiere la presencia de: **Marion Correa Vallejo o** quien sepa de su ubicación, favor comunicarse al teléfono. +57 314-833-4247, en el horario de 8 a 12 y 2 a 4 p.m. de lunes a viernes

The Ecclesiastic Tribunal of Manizales, Caldas Colombia requires the presence of Marion Correa Vallejo or whoever knows her whereabouts, please reach out to +57 314-833-4247. Hours of operation are 8 am to 12 pm and 2 pm to 4 p.m Monday through Friday.

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Choice Partners (CP), a division of Harris County Department of Education (HCDE), is a national cooperative that will be accepting proposals in response to the following Request for Proposals (RFP). Interested proposers may go to www.choicepartners.org and register to download the solicitation or call 877-696- 2122.

• **RFP 26/033LT for Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) Parts, Equipment and Related Services are due by Thursday, October 1, 2026 @ 2:00 PM CT.**

All proposals must be submitted via the HCDE online eBid System at the following link: **https://hcdeebid.ionwave.net.**

Proposals will be opened via Zoom; Information regarding dates, times, and a link to join the meeting is (located within) the eBid System under the "Activities" tab specific to the solicitation.

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USA TODAY WEEKEND EXTRA

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2026 | **SECTION D**

Start a nation. Spread the word.

About this series

Across eight months of conversations with historians, legal scholars, museum leaders, and theologians, USA 250's Outspoken project asks how the American ideals of liberty and equality have changed since the Declaration of Independence, and how they should be understood as the nation marks the July 4, 2026, anniversary. Those conversations unfolded in places where the past still feels close: a brick meeting house on Boston's Beacon Hill, a book-lined study in suburban Maryland, a Vermont home looking out on the Green Mountains, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, a balcony of the Old State House where colonists once heard royal proclamations, and a sun-washed campus in the Sonoran Desert.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS BIG NEWS: IT WAS READ TO CROWDS, CIRCULATED

Greg Burton Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

Most of us picture the Declaration of Independence as a faded parchment under glass, guarded in the National Archives and summoned for big speeches every Fourth of July. ● Emily Sneff asks us to remember it first as something much more urgent and messy: breaking news. Her new book, "When the Declaration of Independence Was News," traces the nine months in 1776 when independence was not yet destiny but a risky announcement that had to be printed, carried, read aloud and argued over in real time.

When we sat down at the National Constitution Center, with Independence Hall in the background, I asked her to walk me through how that news actually reached the people it was meant to redefine.

Sneff

Sneff, an early American historian and leading expert on the Declaration of Independence, points out that the story begins not with signatures but with sound. On July 8, 1776, just four days after Congress approved the final text, the declaration was read aloud in the yard outside what is now Independence Hall, in courthouses across Pennsylvania, and in places like Trenton, New Jersey.

There were no microphones, so a loud voice did the work of a printing press: reading the words while crowds responded with cheers, cannon fire, ringing bells and bonfires fed by royal coats of arms ripped down from public buildings. A few days later in New York, George Washington had the declaration read to Continental Army soldiers preparing for a British attack, and that same night, an equestrian statue of King George III at Bowling Green was pulled down.

See DISTRIBUTION, Page 6D

Inside

Joseph Ellis: Declaration includes "most important" sentence in history. **2D**

Felipe Fernández-Armesto: Nation has overlooked role of Spanish support. **4D**

Reading list: Some recommended titles to help you learn more. **5D**

ILLUSTRATION BY TRACIE KEETON/USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

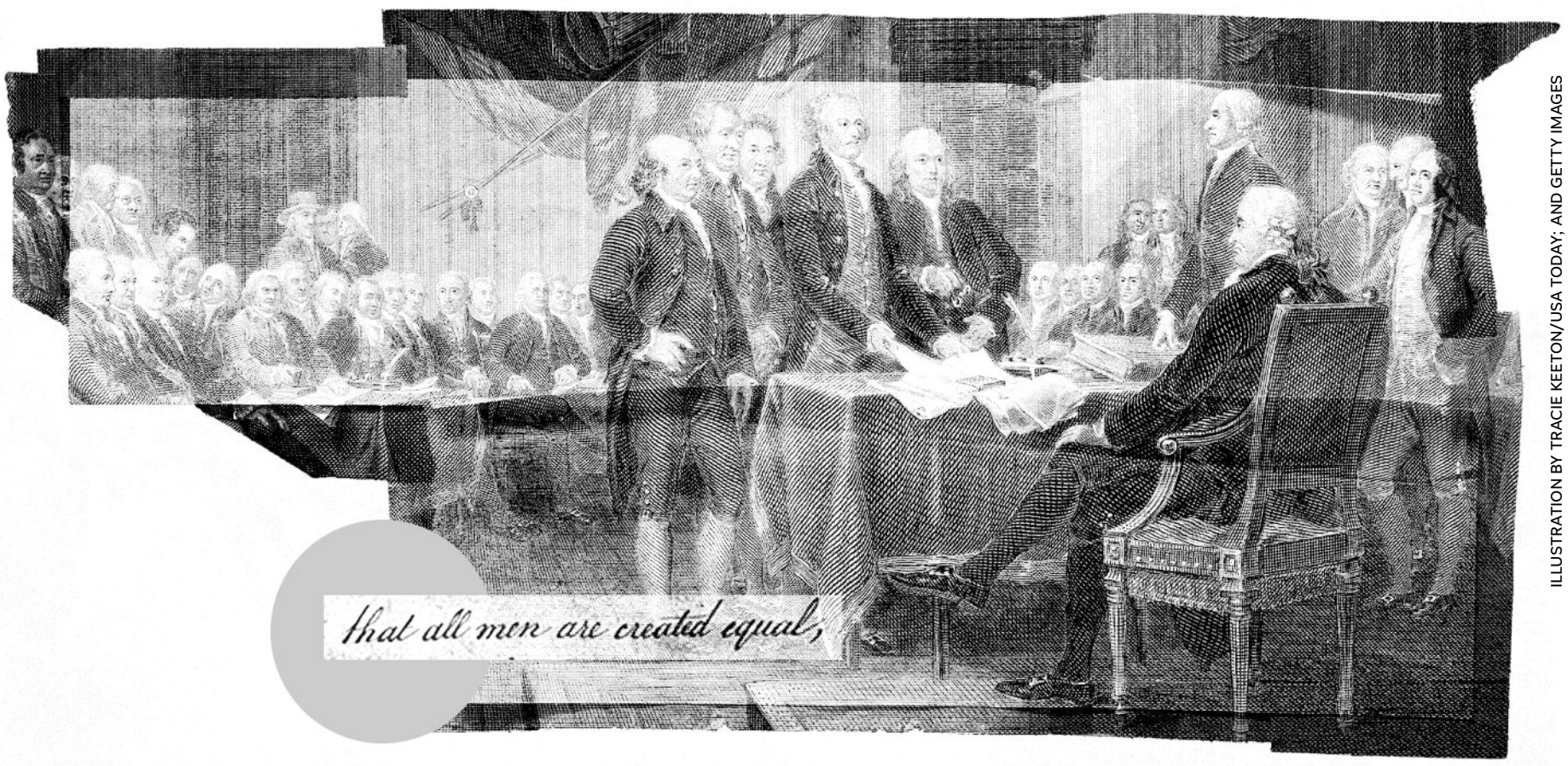


ILLUSTRATION BY TRACIE KEETON/USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

Founders declared equality a universal truth while leaving slavery and Native sovereignty unresolved

THE PROMISE AND THE PARADOX

Greg Burton Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

When I first read Joseph Ellis 30 years ago, I remember feeling like someone had invited me into the room where the founders were arguing. Decades later, sitting in his Vermont home with the country on the brink of the Declaration of Independence's 250th anniversary, it felt fitting to ask one of our most influential historians of the founding era to help us think about what, exactly, we're celebrating. ● Ellis – Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "Founding Brothers" – likes to say his ideal readers are smart people who care about history and "don't know anything," not other academics. That perspective, honed over years of teaching at such places as Yale, West Point and Mount Holyoke, makes him an ideal guide to a document we think we know by heart.

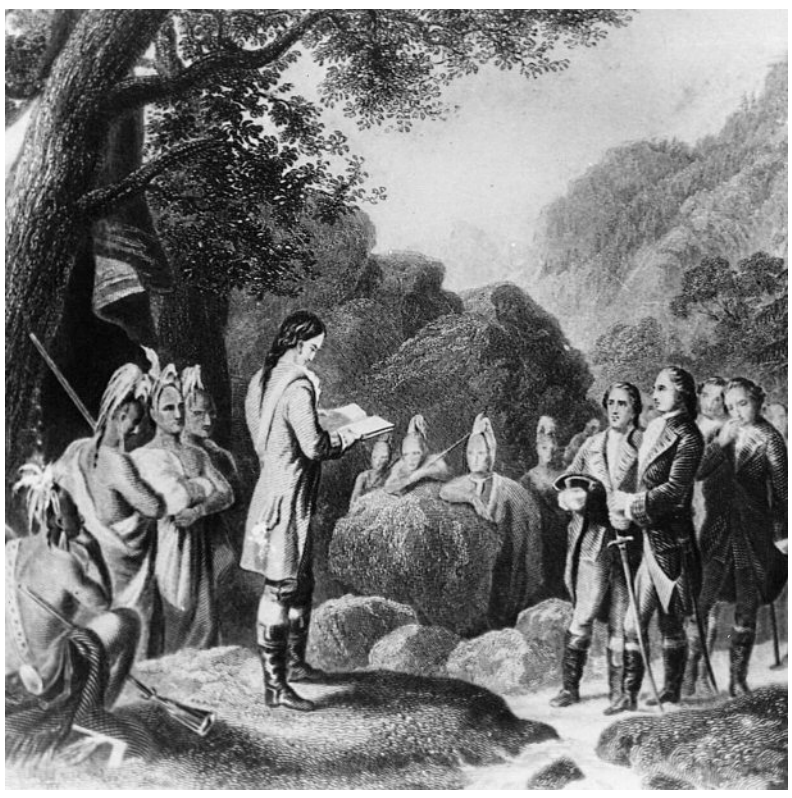
In this Outspoken conversation, Ellis argues that the American Revolution really was a revolution, a "total reversal of the tectonic plates of Western political thought," in which power flowed upward from the people instead of downward from God to kings.

But he insists we can't tell that story honestly without confronting what he calls the founding's "great contradiction": The decision to secure independence and a Constitution while deferring any real solution on slavery and Native sovereignty. On slavery, Ellis describes a classic Shakespearean tragedy – something that could have gone differently but didn't – while the dispossession of Native nations, he says, unfolded more like a Greek tragedy, driven by forces even George Washington could not stop.

Ellis

Ellis tells the story of Washington's failed attempt, working with Henry Knox, to create a permanent Native American state in what is now Alabama and Mississippi – a project that would have allowed the Creek people to keep their land and eventually petition for statehood on equal footing. He recalls how Washington poured his energy into that effort, only to watch it collapse under the weight of land-hungry settlers and state governments he lacked the power to restrain, a defeat the first president never forgave himself for. On slavery, Ellis hears the "Niagara Falls of the Civil War" roaring just beyond the founding generation's compromises, a sound he believes they sensed even if they chose to postpone the reckoning.

For all of that, Ellis still calls Thomas Jefferson's second paragraph – "all men are created equal" and governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed – the most important sentence in American, and perhaps world, history.



The 19th century etching "Washington Reading Prayers in His Camp" depicts Lt. Col. George Washington in a service with troops and Native Americans in 1754 during the French and Indian War. Later, as president, Washington unsuccessfully tried to create a Native American state. GETTY IMAGES

He believes Jefferson knew those words could one day be read far more expansively than they were in 1776, and he points to Abraham Lincoln's tribute to Jefferson for having "the courage to insert an absolute truth ... and leave it there" to be used against injustice in the distant future. When I ask how we should mark the declaration's 250th birthday, Ellis doesn't call for parades or pageantry. He suggests something simpler and harder: Sit down with family, neighbors, or a class, read the declaration aloud, and argue – honestly – about what it meant then and what it means now.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: Joseph J. Ellis III, you are one of America's leading scholars on American history, especially the colonial period, author of "Founding Brothers," which won the Pulitzer Prize, and with a new book out this year, a really important one, called "The Great Contradiction: The Tragic Side of America's Founding."

Answer: All true. All true. I'm often identified as a presidential historian. That's not true. I've written books on three presidents, the first three – Washington, Adams and Jefferson. But I'm a historian of the American founding. That's what I am.

I don't write to other academics. My ideal audience is the kind of students I taught, and I taught some really good students. I taught at Yale, West Point, Mount Holyoke for the longest, Amherst and one other place. My audience is very intelligent, they're genuinely interested in history, and they don't know anything. That's my audience.

If the question becomes, why was the American Revolution a revolution? The answer is it was a total reversal of the tectonic plates of Western political thought. Power did not flow from God to kings. Power flowed upward from the people to their elected representatives. That is a revolutionary change.

But they made two tragic compromises to accomplish that.

That's an interesting way to put it. You said it's a tragic compromise to accomplish that. You're right about that, especially on the slavery issue. If they had tried to end slavery during the war, the Southern states would have seceded, probably gone over to Britain because they wanted to protect their institution.

Later on, during the drafting and voting on the U.S. Constitution – it's 11 years later – if they had insisted that the Constitution essentially end slavery, it would have never passed because the Southern states would have never voted for it. Certainly, it would have never been ratified. There's no question the failure to end slavery was a tragedy. You could hear the Niagara Falls of the Civil War right after. It was coming. That's the bloodiest war in American history.

Another tragedy is the failure to reach a just accommodation with Native Americans. After all, we said Great Britain couldn't take our land from us without our consent. That same principle applied to the Native Americans. These are both tragedies – no question.

Are they Greek tragedies or Shakespearean tragedies? A Greek tragedy means a tragedy that's *sic volvere Parcas* in the Latin – 'tis the will of the gods. You couldn't have changed it. It's built structurally into the society. It's unavoidable. No amount of leadership could have made a difference. A Shakespearean tragedy is not like that; it could have gone differently, but the proper leadership did not do that.

Slavery is a Shakespearean tragedy. The failure to avoid Indian removal is – what did I call it? – it's inevitable. It's a Greek tragedy.

However, you can play with this a bit because if the founders had decided, as I suggested, to put slavery on the agenda either during the war or afterwards at

Continued on next page

"Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon," by Junius Brutus Stears, depicts George Washington, second from right, on his Virginia plantation. Historian Joseph Ellis calls the Founding Fathers' decision to secure independence while deferring a solution to slavery and and Native sovereignty the "great contradiction." GETTY IMAGES

Continued from previous page

the Constitutional Convention, there's no way the Constitution would have gotten passed, and initially, we would not have won the war. So they're caught in a real bind there.

I've read the papers of all the prominent founders. That's the only advantage I have as a historian. I think the argument for Native American failure is pretty safely argued to be unavoidable because in the book, the last chapter is about George Washington's attempt to avoid Indian removal.

His former artillery officer, Henry Knox, comes to him – he's now secretary of war. He says, unless we do something, the next-to-last Indian to be known east of the Mississippi will only be known in the history books. And we fought a war together to prevent the British from taking our property from us without our consent. That's exactly what we're doing to them. We've got to reverse this path.

And Washington said, "Oh God, yes." He stopped doing everything he was doing and made this his priority. And when Washington made something his priority, it almost always wins or almost comes out. And this one won't.

I'm really fascinated by Washington, especially as a conflicted person. He had a lot of correspondence with tribal leaders, and at one point is almost wistful about his relationship with them. He wished they would assimilate, move into farming, adopt an agrarian lifestyle like he said he was going to do after retirement.

Yes. Well, what they create. The Creeks come to the then capital of New York, and they live next to the Adams family, where Adams is vice president. And Abigail is there. And they fall in love with Abigail. They come over and do dances for her. They sing songs to her.

They make her an honorary Creek Indian chief. When she comes to watch the debates in the Senate on one of the bills that they're passing, they sing songs to her. I mean, imagine a movie about this. This is great stuff.

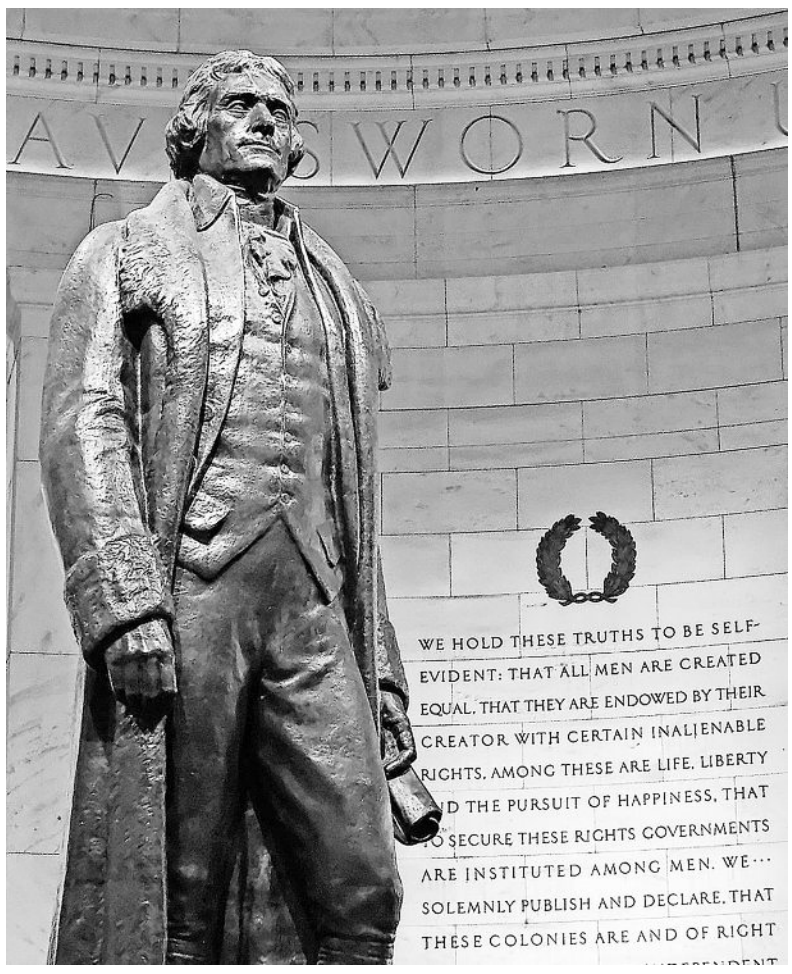
They give the Creeks a body of land that is the current state of Alabama and half of Mississippi. Now, they assume some of that land is going to get smaller because they're going to be forced to move from a hunting and gathering society to an agricultural society. But that's going to be a Native American state. Upon time, it can petition for admission into the Union as a free state.

And Washington is in favor of this?

Yes. When we cross the Mississippi, this is the pattern we want. He's doing everything he can, but he can't enforce it. He can't stop the White population from Georgia – encouraged by the Georgia Legislature; they all own land out there – from coming across in numbers that he can't stop.

He put 2,000 to 3,000 troops there. It would have taken 20,000 or 30,000 to stop them. The whole Continental Army is less than 6,000. And Washington said it would take a Chinese wall to prevent them from coming. It was the biggest defeat of his presidency. He never forgave himself for this.

I want to go back to Jefferson. He famously released his draft and sent it abroad. He wanted people to know that he'd written these passages about abolishing the slave trade. And he seemed – obviously he was completely conflicted, and most of the Founding Fathers were conflicted. He's certainly a person of his time. Is there any reimagining of Jefferson's belief, especially as you read the words – because they're timeless – "all men are created equal?"


WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-
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Ellis says that in the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote the most important sentence in U.S. history, stating that "all men are created equal." GETTY IMAGES

Those are the most important words in American history. And I would say in world history.

Did he mean it? Did he know that one day it could be interpreted that way?

He did.

The Declaration, if we get back to the actual words that were used, was informed by Locke and Montesquieu, the Enlightenment.

It's Enlightenment – classic Enlightenment language: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that to secure these rights, governments are created among men, deriving their authority from the just consent of the governed."

There's another paragraph right after that. It says, of course, if the government does the following, guess what it looks like? The Trump administration. If the government does these things, we must revolt again. And if you read the 27 charges against George III in the declaration, four of them are eerily familiar and resonant about what's happening in the United States right now.

It is richly ironic that in the year we celebrate American independence and the declaration, the occupant of the White House thinks he's the second coming of George III.

> **"It is richly ironic that in the year we celebrate American independence and the declaration, the occupant of the White House thinks he's the second coming of George III."**
>
> **Joseph J. Ellis III**
> American history scholar

Many presidents have run up against that – the grievances, and violated them one way or another. There have been battles and tension between the states and the federal government, military occupation versus civil rule. One thing that I find interesting about the grievances is if you look at the Bill of Rights, it's almost the inverse, right? So, first they wrote the grievances and then they codified the rights that would protect against violations. Have our sense of equality and justice, and liberty, have those changed? How have those evolved since the declaration?

That's a complicated question. I'll give you my attempted answer and let future listeners play with it. The first 10 amendments have a certain eloquence to them now; they resonate.

For example, there is a group of Americans now who are devout Christians who think that we should become a Christian country. To which I say, look, I'm not a Christian anymore, but you can do whatever you want – just don't you tell me that I have to.

To say that it all plays out of the story that begins at the founding sounds a little bit extreme, but it does in the sense that the issue of slavery wasn't, "What do you do with slavery?" but "What happens to the freed slaves?" The idea of a multiracial society was impossible for anybody then to even imagine.

This is a quote from Lincoln – I think I've got it memorized pretty well. It's right after Gettysburg: "All honor to Jefferson, who, in the crucible of a merely revolutionary moment" – I love that, "merely revolutionary"; he must have been smiling when he wrote that – "had the courage to insert an absolute truth and to leave it there, so it would serve the role to oppose injustice and tyranny in the distant future."

He didn't expect it to be applied right away. He didn't expect his values to just take root. But after you think about it, well, that's what's happened.

You brought it home really nicely with Lincoln's quote. And I really wanted to bring it home that way – not with the grievances or the mistakes, but if we think about the things they did right with the Declaration of Independence. How should we celebrate that 250 years later? What should we be doing and thinking about this year?

I'm your teacher, or your former teacher. Join with me now to return to those thrilling days of yesteryear when we were all younger and you were in class and I was your professor. And I'm going to tell you this.

What you do: We sit down as a family or as a class, maybe you neighbors, groups of people. We all read the declaration together and we discuss what we think it means. What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And we have an argument and we have a dialogue about that.

We're not all going to agree. There's 30% of us that are not going to agree about this. But yes, read the declaration. My editors at Knopf would want me to tell you to read my new book, and of course, I just did that. But the most important thing you can read if you hear this is not that book – it's the Declaration of Independence.

Historian argues U.S. independence depended on Spanish support and a Hispanic legacy that remains visible today

America's forgotten debt

ILLUSTRATION BY TRACIE KEETON/ USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

Greg Burton Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

Most Americans know the story of the Declaration of Independence as a clash between British power and 13 embattled colonies, framed in words about liberty and equality that we still quote today. Fewer of us ask what those words actually meant to the men who wrote them – or how much help they had from places like Havana and Madrid.

Renowned author and historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto has spent his career studying colonialism, empire and the Hispanic roots of the Americas. In this Outspoken conversation, he helps us see the declaration through 18th-century eyes and reminds us that the United States has always been more Latin American than we tend to admit.

When I ask what liberty meant to the authors of the declaration, Fernández-Armesto answers bluntly: probably not as much as we like to think. The document, he notes, was a committee product and a piece of propaganda, crafted to sell an unpopular revolution to a skeptical world, and loaded with "good words" whose meanings were never fully pinned down. In practice, he says, the founders thought of liberty as a natural right constrained by civil society and tied to the sovereignty of a new polity, not as the radically individual, personal freedom many Americans champion today.

Equality, he argues, was even more fraught. Jefferson's claim that "all men are created equal" sat uneasily alongside a social order that depended on slavery, and Fernández-Armesto is clear that enslaved Africans were never meant to be included in that vision. He points out that Jefferson initially tried to condemn slavery as a crime of the British Empire, only to have that language stripped out because many revolutionaries hoped independence would actually secure an institution they feared was already weakening under British rule.

Understanding that tension, he suggests, requires us to recognize both the universality of slavery across human history and the uncomfortable fact that various forms of coerced labor and exploitation persist in the United States today.

Fernández-Armesto insists there would likely have been no American independence without Spanish as well as French support – money, guns, ships and soldiers from the Spanish monarchy that most U.S. textbooks barely mention. He argues that the United States should see itself as part of Latin America, not separate from it, noting that Spanish was spoken in much of what is now U.S. territory a century before any permanent English-speaking settlements, and that states like Colorado still wear their Hispanic origins in their names.

For him, today's Hispanic migration is in many ways a return, as descendants of early Spanish and Indigenous families cross borders that were drawn long after their ancestors arrived.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: I know you have studied and written such great work on Hispanic culture in Spain, in particular, and in Latin America, and about colonialism in the Atlantic. But I do want to start by exploring a couple of themes in this series: liberty and equality.

So let's start with a question about liberty. What did liberty mean to the authors of the Declaration of Independence?

Answer: I'm sorry to tell you, Greg, that I don't think it meant very much to them.

In order to understand the Declaration of Independence, you've got to begin by understanding two things. The first is that it was a work produced in committee. And we all know what happens when you try to produce a text in committee: it's a matter of compromise. And the best way of achieving compromise is not to inquire too closely into the meaning of any particular word – you'd just provoke disagreement.

And I think the second thing you've got to understand about the declaration is that it's also a work of propaganda. It was there to justify the American Revolution before the world – quite a hostile world that wasn't very keen on republics, wasn't very keen on revolutions. This was really quite a difficult propaganda exercise.

I think we all know the way to succeed with propaganda or advertising of any sort is to use a lot of good words. You don't worry too much about what they really mean, whether they correspond to any truthful reality about what it is you're trying to sell.

As far as they did think about liberty, I guess they thought about it in the way it was understood generally in Europe and Europe's colonies in the 18th century – as a natural right, something that you were born with, the right to make up your own rules of life and decide what you wanted to do. But that was a bad thing because if everybody does what he or she wants, then you have chaos. So their concept was very much constrained by civil society.

That's interesting, because there were very different ideas of what liberty meant – for instance, between Federalists and the Republicans, correct?

Oh yes, of course. It's always been a contested term, precisely because freedom is meaningless unless it's constrained. That's the paradox of liberty. You can't be free unless you're free of fear of other people's liberty.

They could never quite agree about where the limits of these constraints should lie. And that was a big issue among the American revolutionaries, just as it was among their fellow Englishmen on the other side of the Atlantic.

So do we think of liberty differently today? We talk about it – as Americans – being pro-liberty and having these rights that we believe are superior to many other rights. Does liberty mean the same to us today?

No. Our concept of liberty nowadays is quite different from what people thought of it in the 18th century in two main ways.

Nowadays, most Americans are very highly individualistic, and they think of liberty as something personal to them. It's *their* liberty that they're interested in. That wasn't really the way the founding fathers and the authors of the declaration thought about it. They thought of themselves as part of a polity, a civil society, a kind of corporate entity. The sovereignty of the United States is what they're really after.

"But the Spanish contribution was far greater in volume, if you count the amount of guns the Spanish provided, the money they gave to the American revolutionaries and, above all, the troops they put on the ground."

Felipe Fernández-Armesto
Historian and author

Everybody on the committee that framed the declaration, and almost everybody you think of as a founding father, were very well educated in the Greek and Roman classics, as were all English gentlemen at the time. And that's what these founders were: provincial English gentlemen. And they had the education of provincial English gentlemen.

I think the only one who wasn't really terribly learned was actually George Washington. He wasn't the brains of the Revolution; he was the "do" guy. The "think" guys were all very deeply imbued in Greek and Roman literature.

You mentioned equality, and along with liberty, that's one of the themes I wanted to explore. You also mentioned that some of this was propaganda, of course. But when Jefferson wrote "all men are created equal," he embedded a theme that we have struggled with ever since. I just want to drill down a little bit there. Maybe you can tell us what you think Jefferson meant when he wrote that. Who was included or excluded?

Well, obviously, Blacks were excluded. Of course, Jefferson did originally want to include slavery among the crimes of the British Empire, but his fellow members of Congress persuaded him that this wasn't a very good idea because one of the main purposes of the American Revolution was to keep slavery going, since it was already on its way out in the British Empire.

Slavery was a paradox and a horrible institution. Many of the compromises we made both in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution we continue to wrestle with. And, of course, that led to the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement.

We think of it as a horrible thing. The test of whether it's horrible is: Would any of us like to be slaves? And if we wouldn't, then I think we were acting immorally by enslaving others.

Nonetheless, if you're going to understand history, you've got to start by trying to understand people in the past, not by condemning them. The brutal truth about slavery is that, as far as we know, there has never been a human society, a human culture, that hasn't practiced it.

And, of course, although we denounce it nowadays, we continue to

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ILLUSTRATION BY TRACIE KEETON/USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

An exploration of the Declaration begins with the fundamentals and then widens to books that test and expand on its ideas

REQUIRED READING

Greg Burton Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

Two hundred and fifty years after the Declaration of Independence announced a new nation to the world, the document still feels unfinished – not because its language lacks force, but because each generation has had to argue over what its promises really require.

The interviews in this Outspoken series kept circling the same questions: Who counted in 1776, who was excluded, what did liberty mean in practice, and how did the consequences of the founding fall so unevenly across Native nations, enslaved people, women, immigrants and dissenters?

The best way to mark the anniversary is not with nostalgia alone, but with reading that unlocks its secrets and makes the founding larger and more honest.

That reading starts with the familiar architects of the era, but it should not end there. Joseph J. Ellis' "Founding Brothers and the Great Contradiction," along with T.H. Breen's "American Insurgents, American Patriots," Timothy Sandefur's "Proclaiming Liberty," Walter Isaacson's "The Greatest Sentence Ever Written," and biographies of founders and presidents by Ron Chernow, Walter Isaacson, Joseph Ellis, Jon Meacham and Doris Kearns Goodwin help explain the arguments, ambitions and moral evasions at the center of the Revolution and its afterlives.

But the deeper truth of the 250th is that the Declaration was never only the work of the men whose names ended up on parchment. It was also shaped by printers, poets, artists, preachers, soldiers and readers who seized its language and pushed it toward meanings the founders themselves could not or would not fully embrace.

That is why this reading list also moves deliberately outward. Zara Anishanslin's "The Painter's Fire," Emily Sneff's "When the Declaration of Independence Was News," and "The Poems of Phillis Wheatley" recover the creative and rhetorical world that carried independence into public life, while David Blight's "Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom" and Douglass' own "Narrative" show how later generations tested the Declaration against slavery and national hypocrisy.

Donald J. Grinde Jr.'s work on the Iroquois, David Martinez's books on Indigenous intellectual traditions and O'odham time, Felipe Fernández-Armesto's "Our America," Holly Brewer's "The King's Slaves," Byron Williams' "The Radical Declaration," Seth Cotler's "Tom Paine's America" and Natalie Diaz's "Postcolonial Love Poem" all widen the frame further – toward Native governance, Hispanic America, the imperial roots of slavery, transatlantic radicalism and the Indigenous memory embedded in American place and language.

To read seriously for the 250th is to understand both the context and the consequences of 1776 – to see the Declaration not as a relic under glass but as a living claim on the American conscience, one still being interpreted, resisted and renewed.

Outspoken reading list

- "The Declaration of Independence" – Thomas Jefferson, the Committee of Five and the Second Continental Congress; printer, John Dunlap
- "Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation" – Joseph J. Ellis; publisher, Penguin Random House
- "The Great Contradiction: The Tragic Side of the American Founding" – Joseph J. Ellis; publisher, Penguin Random House
- "A Painter's Fire: A Forgotten History of the Artists Who Championed the American Revolution" – Zara Anishanslin; publisher, Harvard University Press
- "The Poems of Phillis Wheatley, With Letters and a Memoir" – Phillis Wheatley; representative edition, Library of America
- "Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy" – Donald J. Grinde Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen; publisher, American Indian Studies Center, UCLA
- "When the Declaration of Independence Was News" – Emily Sneff; publisher, Oxford University Press
- "American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People" – T.H. Breen; publisher, Macmillan/Hill and Wang
- "Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States" – Felipe Fernández-Armesto; publisher, W.W. Norton
- "The King's Slaves: The British Empire and the Origins of American Slavery" – Holly Brewer; publisher, Princeton University Press
- "The Radical Declaration: An Enlightened American Idea" – Byron Williams; Primary listing
- "Proclaiming Liberty: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence" – Timothy Sandefur; publisher, Simon & Schuster
- "The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972" – ed. David Martínez; publisher, Cornell University Press
- "The Maze of History: Komal Hok, O'odham Teachings, and an Earth-Based Sense of Time" – David Martínez; publisher, University of New Mexico Press
- "Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic" – Seth Cotlar; publisher, University of Virginia Press
- "The Greatest Sentence Ever Written" – Walter Isaacson; publisher, Simon & Schuster
- "Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom" – David W. Blight; publisher, Simon & Schuster
- "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" – Frederick Douglass (with foreword by Kenneth B. Morris); Beacon edition, Beacon Press
- "Washington: A Life" – Ron Chernow; publisher, Penguin Random House
- "Benjamin Franklin: An American Life" – Walter Isaacson; publisher, Simon & Schuster
- "American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson" – Joseph J. Ellis; publisher, Penguin Random House
- "Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power" – Jon Meacham; publisher, Penguin Random House
- "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" – Doris Kearns Goodwin; publisher, Simon & Schuster
- "Postcolonial Love Poem" – Natalie Diaz; publisher, Graywolf Press
- "The Fifth Wave: The Evolution of American Higher Education" – Michael M. Crow and William B. Dabars; publisher, Johns Hopkins University Press

Spanish

Continued from Page 4D

practice it. There are lots of slaves in the United States today – especially domestic servants, especially among undocumented immigrants who are not free in practice to dispose of their own labor, and especially in prostitution. We haven't gotten rid of slavery, even in a society like ours, which is normally so strongly committed against it.

In order to understand what these guys were thinking about when they talked about equality but didn't get rid of slavery, it begins by appreciating that fact, which is absolutely fundamental to understanding the institution throughout the history of its past.

Do you think Jefferson thought that by writing those words and embedding them in the declaration, someday there would be a more equitable vision of what equality meant?

I doubt it. I don't think Jefferson remotely imagined himself as a prophet. I think what the framers of the declaration of Independence were hoping was that the United States, in independence, would be as much as possible like what the 13 colonies had been so far.

They were trying to hold on to their power, to their status, to their wealth and to the possibility of creating their own empire in the United States. I think that's what really mattered.

Let's take a turn. I really do want to talk to you about Spain's role, because I think it's very much misunderstood – or not known – the role Spain played in the American Revolution. Talk to us about that.

In my opinion, there wouldn't have been American independence without Spanish help. The 13 colonies were very outmatched in the struggle with the British Empire.

If it hadn't been for French and Spanish intervention, I don't think they stood a chance of success. French intervention was critical because it kept the British Navy occupied and impeded communications with the British armies on the mainland of the United States.

But the Spanish contribution was far greater in volume, if you count the amount of guns the Spanish provided, the money they gave to the American revolutionaries and, above all, the troops they put on the ground. Most people in the United States don't realize that there were more subjects of the Spanish monarchy fighting for American independence than there were American colonists.

You've said the United States should think of itself as part of Latin America. What do you mean by that?

There are lots of senses in which Latin America does not stop at the Rio Grande.

Ecologically and culturally, a lot of things span both sides of the river. A lot of the influence of the Hispanic past of the New World is discernible throughout the United States. In many ways, Louisiana is much more like Venezuela than it is like Minnesota or Connecticut. There are parts of Idaho which are very similar to Peru.

You've got to look at the United States regionally in order to understand what it is. It is a big country with a lot of differences across it, and some of those differences mean that many parts of the United States strongly resemble, in their history, Latin America.

People forget Spanish was a language spoken in the territory of what is now the United States literally a hundred years before there were any permanent English-speaking settlements anywhere in North America.

People forget that all these immigrants who are now coming over from former Spanish America are, in a way, coming home, because in many cases their own ancestors had settled parts of the United States long before the U.S. took those areas over.

A few years ago, I went to the U.S. Air Force Academy to give some lectures. It's a lovely place, and they're very hospitable, and they gave me an excellent young Air Force lieutenant to show me around. He said to me that he was in favor of Hispanic immigration into the country – which I think he said because I was a Hispanic immigrant myself. He said he was very much in favor of that, but he said that when people come to this country, they must learn the native language.

And I didn't think he was talking about Comanche or Ute or anything like that. I said, yes, I fully agree with you. When people come to this country, they should be made to learn Spanish.

Of course, he didn't kind of get the joke. So I said to him, "What is the name of the state the U.S. Air Force Academy is in?" And the state, of course, is Colorado. You can see it was a Spanish land before it became part of the United States, and that's true of a lot of this country.

Greg Burton is the executive editor of The Arizona Republic.

Distribution

Continued from Page 1D

From there, the document became ink and paper. Sneff explains how Philadelphia printer John Dunlap – already the Continental Congress' official printer – produced the first broadside edition on the night of July 4 under the heading "In Congress, July 4, 1776."

Copies went out under John Hancock's signature to Washington, army commanders and state governments, and soon every active newspaper in the new United States had reprinted the text. Only on July 19 did Congress vote to create an engrossed parchment copy for signing, beginning a process that stretched from Aug. 2, 1776, into 1777 and left latecomers like Delaware's Thomas McKean struggling to prove their names belonged among the signers.

Sneff also restores women to a story we tend to tell as exclusively male. In January 1777, when Congress had decamped to Baltimore, Mary Katharine Goddard – printer, bookseller and postmaster – was commissioned to produce the first broadside listing (most of) the signers' names, including her own in the imprint at the bottom.

Those sheets were meant to form the foundation of state archives, turning a piece of breaking news into an "archival treasure" that future generations would treat as sacred. As the declaration traveled on British mail boats to London, then into European newspapers and translations in German, French, Polish, Italian and Spanish, it ceased to be an internal announcement and became a global text.

For Sneff, the nation's 250th anniversary is another moment when people who think they already know the document can discover how much is still being learned about the way it was made, circulated and repurposed by movements from women's rights to LGBTQ+ equality.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: I'm so happy to talk to you today and learn more about the declaration and your research into the document. So let's start right there. Where was the document first read to the colonists?

Answer: It's a great question. We think about the declaration being signed much more than we think about people actually receiving the news. But the declaration was first read right out here on the other side of Independence Hall.

On July 8, 1776, at the same time it was being read in other places in the surrounding counties in Pennsylvania, and also across the river in Trenton, New Jersey. So just a couple of days after July 4, there are these coordinated public readings where people gathered at a courthouse or central location and someone with a loud voice – because there's no technology, no amplification – read the declaration out loud.

And then the people responded with huzzahs and cheers. There may have been cannon fire or bells ringing out. And in a lot of places, when the declaration was read aloud, the day sort of culminated with pulling all of the symbols of the king, the royal coat of arms, off of buildings and burning them in the streets, having bonfire celebrations.

That happened with George Washington, right? Tell us about that.

So George Washington was in New York City at the head of the Continental Army. They were preparing for a massive British attack on New York, which ultimately happened later in the summer. And so he, by order of the Continental Congress, has the declaration read aloud. With so many troops, there must have been multiple readers – it wasn't just him reading it to thousands of men. But the declaration is read to the men who are fighting for independence, and they respond.

And then later that evening, in Manhattan, at Bowling Green – right in the financial district today – this gilded statue of King George III on horseback was torn down. It's not known for certain who did it; it might have been soldiers, might have been civilians. But it makes a lot of sense that these symbols of the king no longer had a place in the United States.

I love that you're looking at it like news. Certainly, I'm biased, but it was printed; the publishing industry had a huge part in disseminating and spreading the declaration around. Who was the first printer?

The first printer of the declaration was John Dunlap, who was a Northern Irish immigrant printer. His printing office was just down the road, at the corner of Second and Market Streets in Philadelphia. So it was pretty close, convenient to Independence Hall.

He was used to printing resolves of the Continental Congress, like their responses to Britain's Intolerable Acts. So this was not a totally new responsibility for him. But he creates these broadsides, or poster-sized sheets, with the declaration in a nice, wide column under the heading "In Congress, July 4th, 1776."

Crowds attend the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, circa 1776. Similar events were held across the state, in New Jersey and New York and elsewhere. HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Catch up online

To read the entire series of Outspoken interviews and learn what the nation's leading historians are thinking about the Declaration of Independence, go to **usatoday.com/usa250/outspoken-history**.

And then it's the responsibility of John Hancock to send them out – to George Washington, to other leaders of the Continental Army, to each of the states. And then some delegates also send them out to their friends and loved ones. And so the news starts to spread.

John Adams, who was on the drafting committee and had a hand in crafting the text, sends copies and letters that reinforce this idea that it was news. It was something that people were trying to communicate as quickly as possible to the people who would care about it the most.

Then the parchment copy was next. Is that correct?

Yes. The declaration is printed all over the place and printed in broadsides after John Dunlap. It's printed in every active newspaper in the United States. That's all through July 1776.

And on July 19, the Continental Congress decides to create a parchment copy for the delegates to sign. That parchment was ready on Aug. 2, and that's the day signing began. So when people say that July 4, 2026, celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the declaration, they're not right. It's the anniversary of the declaration itself – of Congress approving the text. But the signing came later.

And unlike the Constitution, which was signed on a single day by all the men who were there, the declaration was signed over time. A lot of the delegates signed on Aug. 2, but signing continued as men joined the Continental Congress or returned from being in their home states working on their state constitutions. So it's a much longer process.

One delegate in particular, Thomas McKean of Delaware, may not have signed for years. His name was not on the parchment when the first printed copies with the names of the signers were created in January 1777 by Mary Katharine Goddard in Baltimore. There are only 55 names; his name isn't on there. And this kind of dogs him politically because there are some copies of the Declaration out there that don't have his name on it, and he has to prove that he actually signed the declaration.

It just reinforces the fact that they were never in the same room at the same time – but they all had the same commitment of their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.

George Read actually voted against the declaration on the 2nd, right? But then he ended up signing it.

Yes. There's this long debate that is postponed and then resumes on July 1. The concern among some of the delegates was whether voting for independence represented what the people wanted.

For Delaware, it had a very small delegation, a three-member delegation: one person, Thomas McKean, in favor of independence; one person, George Read, against independence at that particular moment; and then the wild card is Caesar Rodney, who's not in Philadelphia at the time of the first vote.

He famously rides his horse through the night to arrive in time to cast his vote for independence. He is one of a few different last-minute adjustments – whether it's people showing up or people choosing not to come to Congress – that mean eventually 12 of the 13 colonies' delegations are able to vote for independence.

New York still has to abstain because they don't think that they have instructions empowering them to vote for independence.

Tell us more about the Goddard copy. I think it's surprising to learn that it was a woman who was in charge of that printing – and that somebody would allow a woman to be in charge of that printing.

It's true, yes. When you look at the printing business in 1776, throughout the 18th century, women are involved. You have wives, daughters, sisters – they're all part of the businesses – and the printed product at the end just has a man's name on it. So their experiences are kind of erased.

Mary Katharine Goddard is unique because she's printing under her own name. She had been working with her brother and her mother in a printing office together. After her mother passes away and her brother takes on other priorities, she builds up her business herself.

She normally prints her newspaper under her initials, M.K. Goddard. So it may not have been totally known that she was a woman. But when the Continental Congress evacuates Philadelphia for fear of a British invasion and moves to Baltimore, she is the printer in town. She's also the postmaster. So she's handling all of their mail.

And they give her this responsibility of creating the first copies of the declaration that have the names of the signers. For me, the period when the declaration was news ends with her printing, because she created these broadsides that were supposed to be sent out to each of the 13 states. And John Hancock sends a letter saying these are meant to form the foundation of your state archives so that everyone will always remember the Declaration of Independence.

These are the sort of documents that turn the declaration into archival treasure, something that we think of as being in the rotunda of the National Archives or in these very sacred archival spaces.

How did the documents circulate globally? Did it have an impact on other countries? How did it reach those other countries?

The declaration, of course, was printed first in the U.S., but it doesn't stop there, because it was news. It was something that traveled – to Canada, to the Caribbean and then over to Europe.

Interestingly, the declaration traveled to London on British mail ships because there's this big British invasion coming, and British ships have mail ships with them. It actually travels much faster to London than the Continental Congress was necessarily anticipating. By Aug. 16, the declaration is in London newspapers. And then from there it crosses the English Channel and it's printed across Europe.

It's translated. The first translations were produced here in Philadelphia in German. But then once it gets to Europe, it's translated into French, Polish, Italian and Spanish – all sorts of languages.

Jefferson famously sent his drafts around, the unedited drafts. Talk to us about that.

Thomas Jefferson, of course, is the principal author of the declaration. He did not work alone, but he put the words on paper, and so the structure of the declaration we can really attribute to him. He was very proud of his work.

He had these copies – we call them fair copies because they're just written out exactly the way that they looked on the draft – which he sent to his friends, including people like Richard Henry Lee and George Wythe, who had been in Congress, had known that the debates about independence were happening, but were not in Philadelphia for the actual vote on the declaration.

Jefferson sends it out, anticipating that his friends will agree that the draft was better than the final version – that the Continental Congress, as they debated the declaration, butchered it and the final product was not as good. I think that's debatable.

Jefferson's views on the declaration were strong in 1776, and they got stronger over the course of his political career as he becomes so associated with the declaration, especially when he was running for president against John Adams, who he worked with on the declaration.

These fair copies are a really interesting glimpse at what might have been if no edits had been made to the declaration. But they also show how Jefferson wanted to preserve the work that the committee, that he had done on the draft declaration.

And so now, 250 years later, the draft is actually a great teaching tool because there are things in the draft that didn't make it into the final version. You can sit with students and ask why and sort of understand the collaborative process of issuing a declaration of independence, because everyone had to approve it. Everyone had to vote and agree that this is the press release announcing their decision and that the contents of it represented how they all were thinking about their decision.

Because we ended up with the declaration that we ended up with, it's meant that generations of people have critiqued that language or applied it to their own circumstances – from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Martin Luther King Jr. and all sorts of people representing different movements.

There's no way that Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Ben Franklin, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston – the Committee of Five drafters of the declaration – could have foreseen the declaration being applied to protests for the LGBTQ+ movement outside Independence Hall, or Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at the National Mall in Washington, DC, during the March for Jobs and Freedom.

There are all these applications of things like "all men are created equal" through time that, if they had phrased them differently, may not have had the same impact.

So, 250 years later, are you still learning new things about the document? What more is there to learn?

There's a lot to learn. I came to it the declaration having never studied American history. I came to it from the perspective of museums and thinking about how to talk about the declaration with the public, and I thought we must know everything there is to know about it. It's a pretty short document.

But 250 years later, the opposite is true. There's still so much to learn. And there are new resources that are available to us – whether it's using digital technology to encourage students to engage with the declaration in different ways, or museum exhibits that are bringing different copies of the declaration together for the first time, or even just the digitization of copies that are out there so that you don't have to go digging through archives.

To me, the declaration is something that people think they know. And once you start to tear that away, they have so many questions. Major anniversaries like this are opportunities for engagement, for answering those questions. It's happened at each of the major anniversaries in the past. ... I'm hopeful that the 250th will be a moment of civic inspiration for the next generation.

Greg Burton is executive editor of The Arizona Republic.

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT

Aircraft fly in formation over the USS George H.W. Bush in the Arabian Sea on June 30.
PROVIDED BY U.S. NAVY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

6 months after strikes on Iran began, some effects now apparent

Simon Lewis, Trevor Hunnicutt, Idrees Ali and Jonathan Landay
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Six months after the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, the war that President Donald Trump has called a "little excursion" has become a deeply unpopular stalemate that threatens to derail his presidency.

Iran has not surrendered, shipping through the Strait of Hormuz remains severely disrupted, and there is no clear path to ending the conflict that Trump once predicted would be over in four weeks.

Now, in apparent recognition that further military strikes won't force concessions from Iran, the United States is reverting to a campaign of economic pressure in hopes of further weakening Iran's government. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has told allies it's unlikely the United States will launch new attacks "for the time being."

What happens next is unclear but many of the war's probable enduring consequences – for the United States, Iran and the global economy – are already apparent.

Here are six of those:

Trump is paying a political price

The war was unpopular at the outset and has become more so. Trump's approval rating has fallen from 40% to 33% since the conflict began, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling, as rising gas prices have undercut his 2024 campaign promise to lower costs for Americans.

Shiite Muslims grieve as one holds up an image of slain Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Baghdad on March 1.
AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

Trump, who campaigned on a promise to end wars, has argued that Iran's missile buildup and nuclear ambitions required action, but he has not persuaded most voters. Just 31% of the country approve of the conflict, according to the polling. That's a lower number than other recent U.S. conflicts at a similar stage, including the war in Afghanistan, which had approval ratings above 50% for years in Gallup polls.

Voter anger over high prices poses a problem for Trump's Republican Party before November's midterm elections, when it must defend narrow majorities in both chambers of Congress.

The conflict has also widened a rift between more isolationist Republicans, who want to see a quick end, and Republican lawmakers who believe Trump should keep military pressure on Tehran.

Iran war has shaken global economy – but less than feared

The U.S. and Israeli attacks triggered immediate alarm because the Strait of Hormuz – which narrows to about 21 miles wide between Iran and Oman – carried roughly a fifth of the world's energy supplies. The disruption sent oil prices sharply higher and prompted fears of a global downturn.

The damage has been significant but less severe than many economists initially feared. The International Monetary Fund has cut its global growth forecast twice since the war began and now expects the world economy to grow by 3.0% this year, compared with its 3.3% forecast in January.

Still, the global economy has proved more resilient than during the oil shocks of the 1970s. Major economies are less energy-intensive than they

See WAR, Page 5NN

Toll in Nepal, China climbs

Hundreds killed, nearly 1,000 missing in flood

Gopal Sharma, Sahana Bajracharya and Navesh Chitrakar
REUTERS

TRISHULI, Nepal – Rescuers searched Himalayan valleys and hillsides on Aug. 27 after a flash flood that killed at least 359 people and left nearly 1,000 missing, as Nepal and China warned of a risk of fresh flooding from water pooling in two lakes.

Both countries said a glacier collapse early Aug. 26 sent a huge torrent of rock, ice, mud and debris cascading through Himalayan mountain river systems, sweeping through villages and key infrastructure down a route thronged by trekkers and pilgrims that links Kathmandu with Lhasa in Tibet. Of those missing, at least 540 are foreigners.

Authorities in Nepal used helicopters to search for survivors and drop emergency supplies to thousands cut off in towns and valleys, while emergency services recovered dozens of bodies swept down into the plains.

The sheer amount of water and debris stirred up now risks triggering a further disaster.

Nepal's disaster management authority warned that a lake formed by debris blocking the Bhotekoshi River at the flood site was rising and at risk of bursting, while on the other side of the border China said that some 106 million cubic feet of water – the equivalent of about 1,200 Olympic-sized swimming pools – was expected to flow into an already dammed lake over the next three days.

There is a high risk the lake could breach, with peak flow expected around Sept. 1, Chinese state media said, citing the water resources ministry.

See FLOOD, Page 5NN

A woman cries as she waits for updates on the whereabouts of a missing family member outside an army training center in Nepal's Nuwakot district on Aug. 27.
NAVESH CHITRAKAR/REUTERS

ANALYSIS

Meta's settlement leaves core business unscathed

Avoids trial that could have exposed more documents

Aditya Soni and Jaspreet Singh
REUTERS

Meta Platforms emerged from its biggest legal challenge in the United States with its core business intact.

The social media giant agreed on Aug. 26 to pay as much as $18 billion over a decade and limit how teenagers use Facebook and Instagram under a sweeping agreement with U.S. states to resolve claims that it designed those platforms to addict children. Meta denied wrongdoing in agreeing to settle.

While the headline figure is among the largest ever settlements paid by a technology company, it is unlikely to strain a business that earned more than $60 billion last year. The settlement left untouched the personalized feeds and ad targeting that underpin its profits.

Instead, the settlement removes a significant regulatory hurdle that has weighed on Meta's stock and allows the company to avoid a potentially lengthy trial that could have exposed more internal documents about its treatment of young users, according to over a dozen analysts and legal experts.

It also sent Meta's shares higher, suggesting investors welcomed an outcome that will cost the company far less than the $1.4 trillion in penalties it said the states were seeking before trial.

Roughly a month ago, Instagram head Adam Mosseri had a meeting with representatives of the attorneys general in which he said Meta would appeal any adverse verdict, as it is already doing following a billion-dollar child safety ruling won by New Mexico, according to people familiar with the matter.

But Mosseri said Meta was ready to make constructive changes to its platforms, assuming it could work out a deal, the sources added, requesting anonymity as the meeting was private.

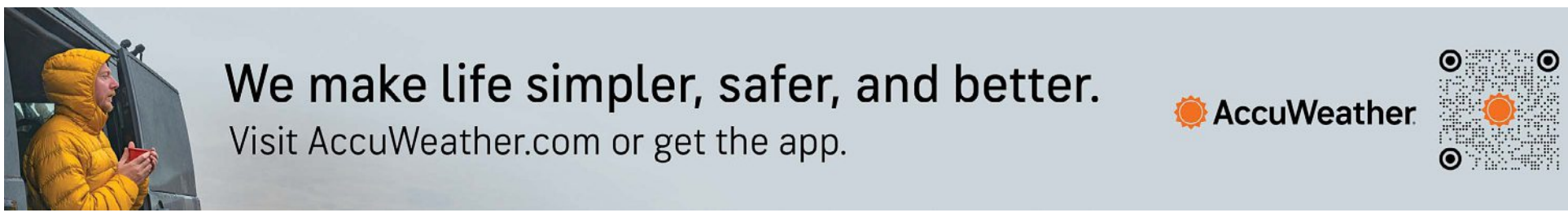
Hanging over the conversation was uncertainty about Section 230, a longstanding U.S. law that shields web platforms from liability for user-generated content. While the states had survived Meta's bid to dismiss the case on those grounds, they would likely pose a formidable challenge on appeal.

"This is a business decision – it will cost them more to finish the trial and lose than to pay just over $1 billion every year for 10 years," said Mary Graw, a law professor at the Catholic University of America.

"Moreover, they will no doubt use this settlement to further lobby against any meaningful regulation that Congress is contemplating," Graw added.

Pressure had been building on Meta

See META, Page 4NN

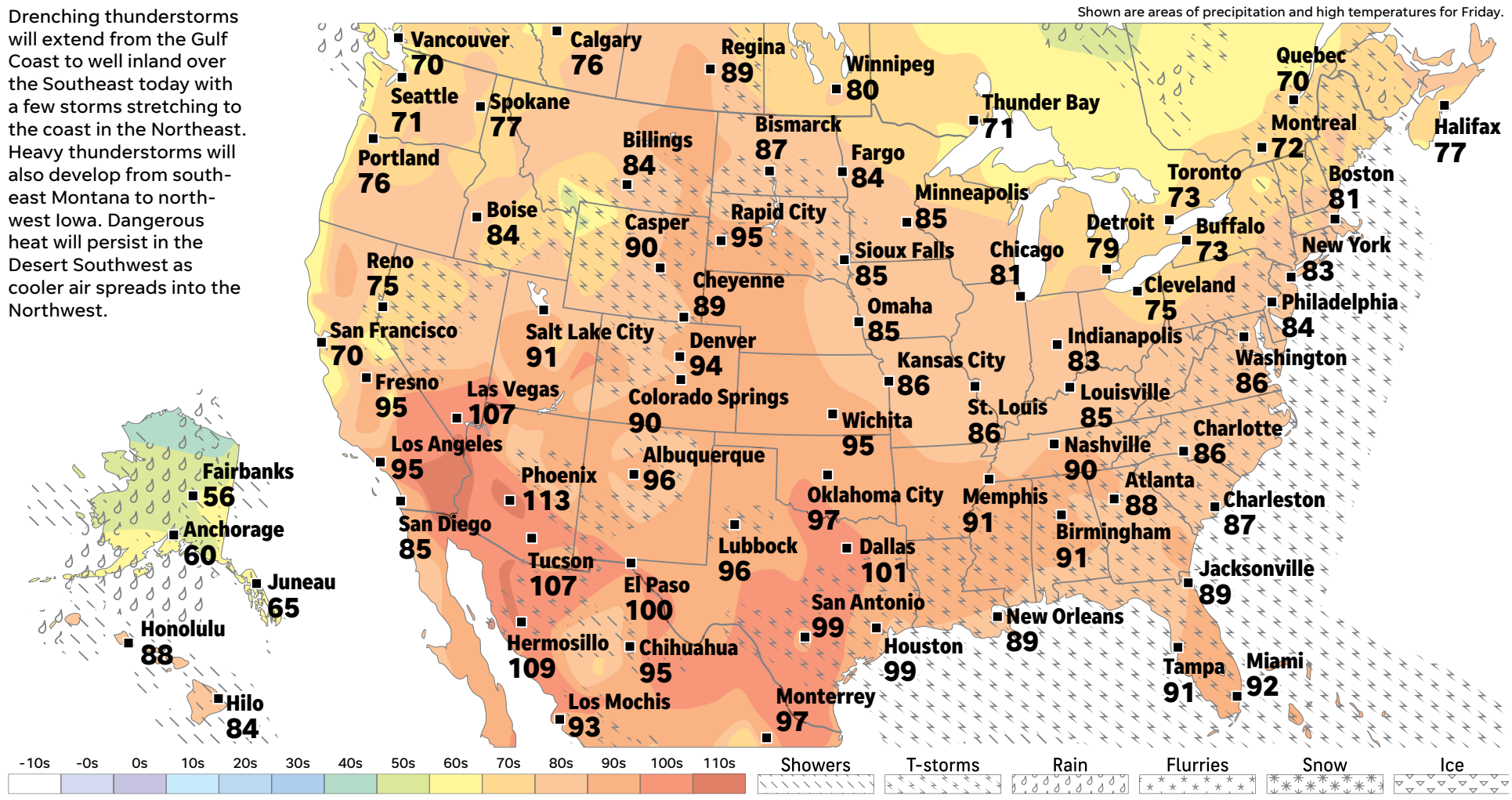


NATIONAL SUMMARY

Drenching thunderstorms will extend from the Gulf Coast to well inland over the Southeast today with a few storms stretching to the coast in the Northeast. Heavy thunderstorms will also develop from southeast Montana to northwest Iowa. Dangerous heat will persist in the Desert Southwest as cooler air spreads into the Northwest.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Friday.



THURSDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High: **119** at Death Valley, CA
Low: **36** at Leadville, CO
Precip: **4.42"** at Washington Township, NJ

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High: **121** at Nasiriya, Iraq
Low: **17** at Mukhomornoye, Russia
Precip: **5.19"** at Saigo, Japan

TODAY IN HISTORY

So much cool air moved southward on Aug. 28, 1944, that Raleigh, N.C., had a high of only 68 degrees, which is its lowest maximum temperature ever in August.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: Does a sundial measure solar radiation?

A: No, it tells the time of day

NATIONAL CITIES FRIDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
● Aberdeen, SD	82/65/t	50
Abilene, TX	101/75/s	81
● Accomac, VA	82/67/t	39
Adrian, MI	80/55/s	25
Akron, OH	77/54/pc	75
Alamogordo, NM	99/70/s	50
● Alexandria, VA	84/68/t	53
Alliance, OH	77/51/c	75
Amarillo, TX	96/70/pc	75
Ames, IA	85/64/s	75
● Anderson, SC	88/70/t	50
Appleton, WI	80/64/s	75
● Asheville, NC	82/65/t	51
Ashland, OH	76/53/pc	75
● Athens, GA	87/70/t	44
● Augusta, GA	83/71/t	42
Austin, TX	101/74/t	75
Bartlesville, OK	95/63/s	100
Battle Creek, MI	78/58/s	25
Bedford, IN	82/61/s	49
Binghamton, NY	73/50/pc	35
● Bluffton, SC	87/75/t	29
● Bremerton, WA	70/52/pc	28
Brockton, MA	81/59/t	25
Brownwood, TX	101/71/s	72
Burlington, IA	82/62/s	43
● Burlington, NC	86/69/t	48
Burlington, VT	75/51/sh	35
Cambridge, OH	80/56/pc	65
Camdenton, MO	86/62/s	43
Canandaigua, NY	72/51/pc	35
Canton, OH	77/53/pc	75
Carlsbad, NM	99/73/s	74
Chambersburg, PA	82/59/pc	53
Cherry Hill, NJ	81/66/t	70
Cincinnati, OH	82/61/s	60
Clarksville, TN	88/64/s	51
Coldwater, MI	79/55/s	25
Columbus, OH	81/58/s	53
Corning, NY	74/46/pc	49
Corpus Christi, TX	99/76/t	25
● Daytona Beach, FL	90/75/t	25
● Deming, NM	100/71/pc	50
DeRidder, LA	95/73/t	53
Des Moines, IA	86/67/s	75
Detroit, MI	79/59/s	25
Devils Lake, ND	79/62/pc	41
Dover, NH	81/57/t	25
El Paso, TX	100/76/s	25
Elmira, NY	75/47/pc	42
Erie, PA	73/56/pc	40
Eugene, OR	80/50/pc	25

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Evansville, IN	86/62/s	75
Fall River, MA	82/63/t	25
Farmington, NM	96/65/s	50
● Fayetteville, NC	85/71/t	48
Fond du Lac, WI	80/60/s	75
Fort Myers, FL	93/76/t	25
Fort Smith, AR	95/68/s	58
Framingham, MA	81/56/t	25
Freeport, IL	82/60/s	75
Fremont, OH	76/57/pc	48
Fort Collins, CO	93/63/t	75
● Gadsden, AL	90/66/t	52
● Gainesville, FL	88/72/t	25
Galesburg, IL	82/60/s	75
● Gastonia, NC	84/69/t	51
Glen Rose, TX	102/71/s	86
● Gonzales, LA	92/74/t	55
Great Falls, MT	84/56/pc	51
Green Bay, WI	77/60/pc	75
● Greenville, SC	85/69/t	50
Hackensack, NJ	83/63/t	58
Hagerstown, MD	84/62/pc	53
● Hattiesburg, MS	92/71/t	49
Henderson, KY	86/60/pc	75
● Hendersonville, NC	80/64/t	51
Herkimer, NY	77/48/c	35
Hillsdale, MI	79/55/s	25
Holland, MI	78/60/s	25
Hornell, NY	75/49/pc	42
● Houma, LA	89/73/t	55
Howell, MI	79/58/pc	25
Hutchinson, KS	95/70/t	53
Hyannis, MA	82/66/t	25
Indianapolis, IN	83/61/s	75
Iowa City, IA	84/64/s	36
Ithaca, NY	72/46/pc	35
Jackson, MS	93/69/t	50
Jackson, TN	88/63/s	49
● Jacksonville, FL	89/73/t	25
● Jacksonville, NC	84/72/t	40
Kent, OH	77/51/pc	75
Kewanee, IL	82/60/s	75
Keyser, WV	84/59/s	44
● Kinston, NC	84/71/t	42
Knoxville, TN	87/67/t	54
Lafayette, IN	81/58/s	53
Lafayette, LA	91/74/t	53
Lakeland, FL	92/75/t	25
Lansing, MI	78/58/pc	25
Las Cruces, NM	98/69/s	67
Lebanon, PA	84/60/t	57
● Leesburg, FL	90/76/t	25

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Levittown, PA	81/63/t	70
Lincoln, IL	84/60/s	75
Louisville, KY	85/66/s	75
Lubbock, TX	96/73/s	75
Manitowoc, WI	74/63/pc	75
Mansfield, OH	77/54/pc	61
● Marshall, NC	81/62/t	48
Marshfield, WI	79/58/s	75
Massillon, OH	79/52/pc	75
● McLean, VA	84/66/t	53
Melbourne, FL	90/77/t	25
Memphis, TN	91/72/s	101
Middletown, NY	81/52/t	45
Milford, MA	80/57/t	25
Milwaukee, WI	79/64/s	75
Monroe, MI	78/58/s	25
Monroe, LA	96/69/t	58
● Montgomery, AL	89/71/t	40
Muncie, IN	80/57/s	52
Murfreesboro, TN	88/64/s	51
Naples, FL	92/76/t	75
Nashville, TN	90/65/s	51
Neptune, NJ	79/68/t	65
New Bedford, MA	82/64/t	25
● New Bern, NC	84/73/t	40
New Philadelphia, OH	78/51/pc	75
Newark, OH	80/55/s	53
Newton, NJ	81/54/t	60
New York, NY	83/65/t	58
Norwich, CT	80/59/t	54
● Ocala, FL	90/73/t	75
Oklahoma City, OK	97/69/s	130
Opelousas, LA	93/71/t	53
Oshkosh, WI	78/62/s	75
● Palm Beach, FL	91/81/t	25
Palm Springs, CA	113/90/s	80
● Panama City, FL	85/74/t	75
Pekin, IL	84/62/s	75
● Pensacola, FL	84/73/t	75
Peoria, IL	83/62/s	75
● Petersburg, VA	86/68/t	46
Phoenix, AZ	113/88/s	104
Port Huron, MI	74/54/pc	36
Portsmouth, NH	82/60/t	25
Poughkeepsie, NY	81/57/t	45
Providence, RI	81/64/t	50
Pueblo, CO	98/62/t	75
Quincy, MA	82/60/t	25
Redding, CA	91/59/s	38
Reno, NV	75/56/pc	25
Ravenna, OH	77/50/c	75
Richmond, IN	82/58/s	67

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Rochester, NY	71/50/pc	31
Rockford, IL	82/60/s	75
Ruidoso, NM	83/58/t	52
Salem, OR	78/51/c	25
Salina, KS	93/71/s	51
Salinas, CA	75/57/c	34
● Salisbury, MD	85/69/t	53
San Angelo, TX	99/72/s	83
Sarasota, FL	90/76/t	25
● Savannah, GA	87/73/t	31
Sheboygan, WI	76/62/pc	75
● Shelby, NC	83/68/t	51
Sherman, TX	100/72/s	71
Shreveport, LA	98/72/t	60
● Silver City, NM	94/65/pc	49
● Sioux Falls, SD	85/67/t	45
Somerset, PA	76/55/pc	45
Somerville, NJ	82/58/t	65
South Bend, IN	80/58/s	75
● Spartanburg, SC	85/70/t	50
Springfield, IL	83/61/s	75
Springfield, MO	88/65/s	40
● St. Augustine, FL	89/75/t	25
St. Cloud, MN	83/65/s	53
St. George, UT	103/76/s	25
● Staunton, VA	84/62/t	45
Stevens Point, WI	81/60/s	75
Stockton, CA	86/59/pc	39
Stroudsburg, PA	82/53/t	60
● Stuart, FL	91/77/t	25
Sturgis, MI	80/57/s	25
● Tallahassee, FL	85/73/t	75
Thibodaux, LA	89/72/t	55
Topeka, KS	88/67/s	71
● Tuscaloosa, AL	94/71/t	50
Utica, NY	75/48/pc	33
Ventura, CA	81/66/s	54
Victorville, CA	102/69/s	77
Vineland, NJ	82/63/t	65
Visalia, CA	97/66/pc	40
● Washington, DC	86/69/t	53
● Watertown, SD	81/66/t	62
Wausau, WI	79/60/s	75
Waynesboro, PA	81/60/t	53
White Plains, NY	81/60/t	61
Wichita Falls, TX	101/71/s	100
Wilmington, DE	84/65/t	53
● Wilmington, NC	83/72/t	40
Wisconsin Rapids, WI	81/60/s	75
Wooster, OH	77/51/s	75
Worcester, MA	78/59/t	25
York, PA	82/60/t	57

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Friday High/low/W	Saturday High/low/W
● Acapulco	92/77/c	91/79/t
Addis Ababa	76/57/sh	73/56/r
Algiers	89/74/s	89/74/pc
Amman	94/75/s	91/70/s
Amsterdam	71/63/sh	71/64/sh
● Ankara	81/58/s	76/57/sh
Asuncion	95/70/pc	86/68/c
Athens	92/77/s	90/74/s
Auckland	64/56/r	60/53/r
Baghdad	114/92/s	116/85/s
● Bangkok	91/81/r	91/81/r
Beijing	72/64/r	89/63/pc
Beirut	89/77/s	91/76/t
Belgrade	93/70/s	91/66/t
● Berlin	81/63/sh	77/62/sh
Bogota	70/48/sh	68/51/pc
Brussels	71/60/r	70/62/sh
Bucharest	81/58/s	84/62/s
Budapest	90/68/s	84/59/pc
Buenos Aires	62/50/pc	61/52/s
Cairo	98/79/pc	96/76/s
Cape Town	72/55/c	65/50/r
● Caracas	93/78/r	92/77/r
Casablanca	81/62/s	87/64/s
● Colombo	88/79/r	89/80/r
● Copenhagen	69/60/r	69/61/sh
Damascus	99/69/s	95/69/s
● Dublin	72/58/sh	62/54/sh
Geneva	70/53/sh	76/56/sh
Guatemala City	85/63/t	83/62/t
Hanoi	92/80/r	86/78/t
Harare	74/48/s	73/51/pc
Havana	93/75/r	93/75/r
Helsinki	66/60/pc	67/59/c
● Hong Kong	90/82/r	92/82/r
Jakarta	91/76/r	91/76/s
Jerusalem	88/70/s	88/70/s
Johannesburg	71/44/s	70/44/pc
Kabul	93/68/pc	93/67/pc
Khartoum	105/85/s	105/86/pc
Kyiv	73/53/pc	80/62/pc
Kingston	93/81/c	93/81/s
La Paz	67/34/s	64/35/sh
Lagos	84/77/r	84/77/r
Lima	77/69/pc	77/68/pc
Lisbon	77/63/pc	80/66/s
London	74/62/pc	70/59/sh
Madrid	79/55/s	87/58/s
● Manila	85/78/r	83/78/r
● Mexico City	78/58/r	74/57/r
Milan	86/67/t	88/66/sh
Mombasa	86/71/r	86/71/sh
Montevideo	60/45/s	61/43/pc
Montreal	72/54/pc	75/60/pc
Moscow	67/52/pc	69/53/s
Nairobi	79/56/pc	78/56/pc
New Delhi	96/83/pc	98/82/pc
Panama City	89/76/t	89/76/r
Paris	70/59/sh	71/60/r
Port-au-Prince	99/74/pc	98/75/s
Rio de Janeiro	80/72/pc	88/76/c
Riyadh	114/87/s	114/85/pc
Rome	96/78/pc	90/70/c
San Jose	84/71/r	84/71/t
San Salvador	92/69/pc	92/69/t
Santiago	62/42/sh	65/40/r
Sao Paulo	87/71/pc	91/72/pc
Sarajevo	100/67/c	90/63/t
Shanghai	90/81/t	92/81/sh
Singapore	91/81/t	93/80/pc
Stockholm	69/58/c	63/55/r
Sydney	67/51/s	66/50/s
Taipei	97/80/c	95/80/r
Tegucigalpa	89/68/pc	89/67/t
Tehran	100/78/pc	99/80/pc
● Tokyo	89/77/r	78/72/r
Toronto	73/55/c	77/64/sh
Tunis	108/81/pc	99/79/pc
● Vancouver	70/55/sh	68/56/sh
Vienna	90/67/c	81/59/sh
Warsaw	78/61/c	70/55/t
● Yerevan	83/60/r	79/63/t
Zagreb	96/69/s	82/60/t
● Zurich	76/54/sh	77/56/r

● Denotes possible travel delays Friday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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Autism panel backs new plan

Recommends doubling spending on care, support

Robin Respaut
REUTERS

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for years pushed a link between vaccines and autism, which scientists say has been thoroughly refuted. ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS FILE

A U.S. advisory committee on autism adopted a new strategic plan on Aug. 27 that calls on federal agencies to nearly double investment in research and initiatives focusing on medical care, housing, aging and other priorities to support people with the condition and their families.

The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, an advisory panel appointed by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. this year to reshape federal priorities in autism, recommended boosting investment by the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other agencies to roughly $760 million annually from $390.4 million to address a sweeping array of issues impacting people with autism and their families.

Current federal spending, relative to the economic burden of autism, is less than for other diseases, such as Alzheimer's and asthma, the panel said.

The committee's public members voted to adopt the new strategic plan, while many of the panel's federal agency representatives voted to abstain, some arguing they needed more time to review the plan and public comments.

The IACC provides nonbinding guidance to the federal government regarding autism-related priorities.

Kennedy, a longtime anti-vaccine activist before joining the Trump administration, for years pushed a link between vaccines and autism, which scientists say has been thoroughly refuted by studies examining millions of children over many years.

The committee's strategic plan does not mention vaccines or studying a link to autism.

The detailed plan has two overarching priorities: urgently improving medical care and research for people with autism; and supporting autistic people across their lifespans, especially those with complex needs.

"Individuals with profound autism, or the highest support needs, were relatively underrepresented in previous strategic plans and notably underrepresented in autism research," said Dr. Sylvia Fogel, chair of the IACC and a Harvard Medical School instructor. "We wrote the plan to correct that inequity."

Kennedy, who has made autism a signature issue for the Department of Health and Human Services, has pursued new studies on autism through a $50 million NIH project. He has also commissioned studies reexamining autism and vaccines.

About one-third of the advisory board are parents of profoundly autistic children. Fogel, who is the parent of an adult child with profound autism, said many of the plan's priorities apply across the autism spectrum, including those with lesser support needs.

"There's a significant portion of the autism community who are highly dependent on care and who are really struggling," she said, describing their needs as urgent and significant.

The new strategic plan calls for agencies to move quickly to improve assessment and treatment of commonly co-occurring medical conditions, including gastrointestinal disorders, sleep disruption, seizures, speech and motor impairment, and mental health conditions for autistic patients, and to invest in new research in these and other areas.

The plan also recommends new federal funding to study neurodevelopmental regression, a condition estimated to occur in 30% of autistic children characterized by the loss of previously developed skills or milestones.

"Families need research that tells clinicians what to look for, what to test, and what may be treatable," said Jennifer Philips, a committee member and parent of a profoundly autistic child who experienced regression at age 2.

The prevalence of autism has risen rapidly in recent decades to an estimated 1 in 31 children aged 8 in 2022 from 1 in 150 in 2000, according to the CDC, partly due to improved screening and a broader definition of the condition. The agency estimates 26.7% have profound autism.

Yet the prevalence of adults with autism is unknown. The plan calls for the federal government, for the first time, to estimate the prevalence of autistic adults.

Trump orders Lake Ontario renamed

Move comes as trade war with Canada escalates

Joey Garrison
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Aug. 27 directing his administration to change the name of Lake Ontario to Lake America.

He had threatened the action for days amid a rapidly escalating trade war with Canada.

The order instructs the Interior Department and U.S. Board on Geographic Names to formalize the change within 30 days. Trump signed it in the Oval Office next to an easel holding a poster board with a map of the Great Lakes and the slogan "Making the Great Lakes Greater."

Lake Ontario forms the shoreline of Toronto, Canada's largest city, and under a 1909 treaty, about 52% of the lake's surface area is in Canada, with the remainder in New York. However, White House staff secretary Ben Moss said most of the lake's volume, including its deepest parts, is in U.S. territory.

"This will reflect that this is an American lake," Moss said as he handed the president the order to sign.

Under the new order, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and the board are instructed to update the Geographic Names Information System to reflect the new name. All federal government references to the lake on agency maps, contracts and other documents must also reflect it.

"The Canadian officials have treated us very badly. They're nasty people," Trump said, accusing the northern neighbor of imposing enormous tariffs on products from American farmers.

The president slapped sweeping 50% tariffs on many goods from Canada after trade negotiations between the two countries fell apart Aug. 22. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney countered by hitting U.S. exports with tariffs ranging from 15% to 50%. Trump has threatened to also double tariffs on automobiles and auto parts from Canada from 25% to 50%.

Carney said later on Aug. 27 the name would remain Lake Ontario "then, now and always."

"The name is more than 400 years old, predating both the Confederation of Canada and the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America," he wrote on X.

It comes from the native Iroquois tribe's word "Ontarí'io," meaning "lake of shining waters," according to the Center for Great Lakes Literacy. The name first started appearing on maps of European explorers in the 1660s.

Naming geographic features in the United States is the responsibility of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, which is made up of representatives from several federal agencies. Changing a name is typically the subject of a formal review process; however, the process was expedited with the president's 2025 renaming of the Gulf of Mexico. It's unlikely the rest of the world will follow suit.

The international community, including Mexico, still refers to the body of water bordering the United States' southeastern shores as the Gulf of Mexico despite Trump rebranding it as the Gulf of America in 2025.

As he signed the new order, Trump compared it to that earlier renaming.

"If you think about it, we have a gulf and we have a lake, now all we need is an ocean," Trump said. "So maybe we'll have to change the name of the Atlantic and/or the Pacific."

Contributing: Reuters

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Nasdaq, S&P 500 lifted by Nvidia's robust forecast

Chipmaker meets lofty investor expectations

Saeed Azhar, Purvi Agarwal and Niket Nishant
REUTERS

NEW YORK – The tech-heavy Nasdaq outperformed peers at the close of trade on Aug. 27 after chipmaker Nvidia's bumper revenue forecast reaffirmed the strength of the AI boom and fueled gains in tech stocks.

Nvidia shares jumped 8.7% after the chip company's robust forecast met lofty investor expectations, bolstering the view that the tech rally still has room to run as companies at the heart of AI build-out continue to deliver impressive growth.

"Nvidia's results show that the AI boom is not running out of demand ... while delivering that growth is becoming more expensive and capital-intensive," said Lale Akoner, global market strategist at eToro.

Morgan Stanley said in a note Aug. 27 that Nvidia's forecast for revenue growth of 70% next year is well above Morgan Stanley's estimate for a 52% rise and that the consensus estimate is closer to 40%.

Nvidia has warned that shortages of memory components could curb the pace of the industry's growth.

The S&P 500 closed 55.29 points, or 0.72%, higher at 7,730.99; and the Nasdaq Composite gained 411.16 points, or 1.57%, to 26,541.35. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 105.56 points, or 0.20%, to 53,569.44.

U.S. chip-linked stocks broadly rose, with the semiconductor index notching a 2.3% gain. The S&P 500 information technology sector rose 3.4%, making it the best gainer among the S&P's 11 constituents, which were mostly in the red.

"While Nvidia's earnings beat and strong guidance restarted the party, it's apparent that not all sectors of the market were invited," said Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist at Allianz Investment Management.

"Market headwinds continue to be a factor as higher interest rates, geopolitical tensions and global trade, among other things, are playing a role in the weakness seen across other sectors."

Salesforce surged 22.6% after raising annual revenue and profit forecasts, and rolling out a new plug-in integrated with Anthropic's Claude AI models.

CrowdStrike climbed 20.5% after the cybersecurity software provider raised its annual revenue forecast and topped second-quarter earnings estimates.

The Salesforce and CrowdStrike reports calmed worries that advanced AI tools could upend the traditional software industry, boosting investor appetite for beaten-down software stocks and narrowing the gap with semiconductors, which are seen as the primary beneficiaries of the AI boom.

Moderna dropped 4.6% after unveiling a $2 billion convertible bond sale, while HP fell almost 3% after shipments and margins of its PC unit declined in the third quarter.

Oil prices

Brent crude futures finished up $1.86, or 2.1%, at $89.70 a barrel on Aug. 27. West Texas Intermediate crude futures settled up $1.30, or 1.6%, at $83.53.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Aug. 28. On this date in:

476: German military leader Odoacer and his forces captured and executed Orestes, the unofficial ruler of Italy and the father of last emperor of the Western Roman Empire Romulus Augustuslus. Odoacer later disposed of Augustuslus and declared himself king of Italy.

1833: The United Kingdom's Slavery Abolition Act received royal assent after passing Parliament. Upon going into effect the following year, it freed more than 800,000 enslaved people in the Caribbean and South Africa, though most had to serve as apprentices for another four to six years. The act made Canada a free territory for enslaved people from America.

1837: Pharmacists John Lea and William Perrins of Worcester, England, began manufacturing Worcestershire sauce. According to the story, they made a batch from a recipe a Bengal governor brought back from India, thought it was harsh and forgot it in the cellar for a year or so, at which point they tasted it again and found the results delicious.

1879: King Cetshwayo, the last great king of the Zulus, was captured by the British after his defeat in the British-Zulu War. He defied British rule and became a national hero; his grave is considered sacred to this day.

1917: Ten suffragists were arrested as they picketed the White House to demand that President Woodrow Wilson support a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote. The protest had started in January and drew more than 1,000 women over the course of the year. Wilson announced in January 1918 that he would support such an amendment.

1941: SS and police forces killed more than 23,000 Jews in occupied Ukraine. Soldiers marched the victims to bomb craters at Kamianets-Podilskyi and turned machine guns on them; they were either shot or smothered. It was one of the first large-scale massacres of the Holocaust.

1955: Emmett Till, 14, was kidnapped and lynched by White men in Money, Mississippi. His anguished mother insisted on an open-casket ceremony to show the world the gruesome cruelty of lynching. An all-White jury acquitted the two murder suspects after barely an hour of deliberation; they later confessed to the crime.

1963: The March on Washington took place, drawing about 200,000 peaceful protesters to the nation's capital to advocate for equal rights for Black Americans. One of the pinnacles of the Civil Rights Movement, the day featured a performance by Mahalia Jackson and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

1986: Tina Turner, the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll, received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The star is at 1750 Vine St. in front of the Capitol Records tower.

1996: The final divorce decree ended the 15-year marriage of Charles and Diana, prince and princess of Wales. The couple had been separated for four years, and Queen Elizabeth II urged them to make the decision permanent.

2020: Actor Chadwick Boseman died of colon cancer at 43, shocking and saddening fans. His memorable and wide-ranging performances included Thurgood Marshall, Jackie Robinson, James Brown and T'Challa, the Black Panther.

USA TODAY Network

NEWS IN BRIEF

FAA moves to fire 2 controllers over fatal LaGuardia collision

WASHINGTON – The Federal Aviation Administration is moving to fire two air traffic controllers at New York's LaGuardia airport who are believed to have left early before an Air Canada plane collided with a fire truck on March 22, killing both pilots, sources told Reuters.

The crash renewed scrutiny of chronic staffing shortages and working practices in U.S. air traffic control, with investigators examining whether adequate staffing was in place when the accident occurred.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association said it is actively discussing these allegations with FAA leadership, declining to comment further.

Officials told Reuters the two FAA employees were supposed to be on duty when the accident occurred but had left the facility.

Officials widen lettuce-related cyclosporiasis probe to 20 states

U.S. health authorities have widened their probe into a cyclosporiasis outbreak tied to iceberg lettuce from central Mexico after detecting cases in three additional states, raising the total to 20 states, the FDA and CDC said on Aug. 27.

The outbreak, linked to iceberg lettuce served at Taco Bell restaurants and sourced from Taylor Farms' operations in Mexico, has grown to 11,458 cases, including 495 hospitalizations.

The Food and Drug Administration said Georgia, Tennessee and Texas have been added to the list of states since the last update a week earlier.

Michigan has been the hardest hit, reporting two related deaths, both in people with significant underlying health conditions. Michigan's health department reported 14,510 cases linked to an outbreak of cyclosporiasis, up 233, or about 2%, since its update last week.

U.S. nearing deal on long-term access to Venezuela's oil reserves

HOUSTON – Trump administration officials are working on a deal to secure long-term access to a portion of Venezuela's crude reserves, sources with knowledge of the negotiations said on Aug. 27, a move that could ultimately lower the cost of oil imports.

The agreement, which could be signed and made public soon, is expected to operate in a way that would let the U.S. government lock in a group of Venezuelan oilfields to be developed by American companies, the sources said, adding that the resulting supply would be guaranteed for the United States.

One source said a "lease" was in consideration as the legal model to make the deal work, with a further auction or tender to allocate each one of the fields among U.S. producers.

A list of 17 fields in negotiation seen by Reuters includes green fields in the vast Orinoco Belt combined with mature areas in Lake Maracaibo, some of which are currently operated by a small Chinese firm whose contract was signed during the Maduro administration.

Pentagon policy chief: U.S. wants Europe-led defense of continent

BRUSSELS – The Pentagon's policy chief told NATO members on Aug. 27 that the alliance must adapt and that he wants to hear from allies as part of a review of U.S. forces in Europe he said was meant to enable a more European-led defense of the continent.

Washington announced a six-month review of U.S. troop deployments in Europe in June and in recent weeks sent NATO members a questionnaire covering issues ranging from defense spending to strategy, procurement and support for U.S. foreign policy priorities. The process has fueled questions among European officials about whether the U.S. administration is seeking to use the review as a real consultation, symbolic gesture or negotiating tactic.

"We believe that in order to survive and indeed thrive, NATO must change," U.S. Under Secretary of War for Policy Elbridge Colby told ambassadors representing NATO countries during a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Aug. 27, according to prepared remarks.

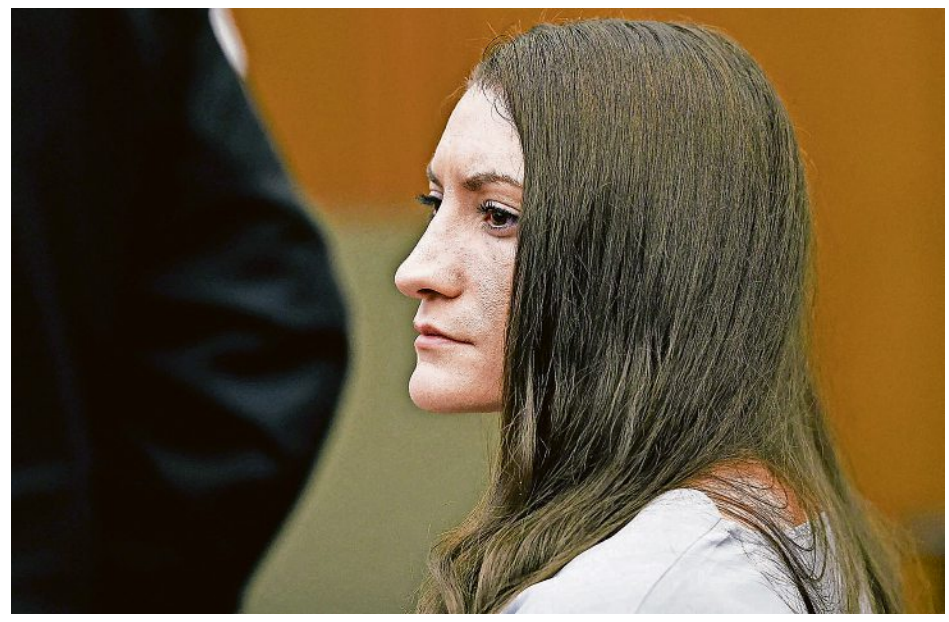
"This is not a narrow review about places and bases alone, although those are of course important. Rather, it is a look at our strategic posture here in the broader sense," he said, adding that "it will encourage, enable, and impel a transition to a more durable and powerful European-led conventional defense of the continent."

Reuters

Clancy trial draws to close

Jury deliberations in MA murder case begin

Nate Raymond
REUTERS



Lindsay Clancy watches as the jury leaves to start deliberations in Plymouth County Superior Court in Massachusetts on Aug. 27. GREG DERR/POOL VIA REUTERS

Clancy's defense attorney Kevin Reddington speaks to reporters as he exits the courthouse in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on Aug. 27. JOSEPH PREZIOSO/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Lindsay Clancy's lawyer urged jurors at the end of her murder trial on Aug. 27 to conclude that she was in the throes of postpartum psychosis when the Massachusetts woman killed her three young children in 2023, an act a prosecutor said she intentionally carried out after sending her husband out on an errand.

Clancy, 36, admits that she killed her three children by strangling them with exercise bands in the basement of her home in the Boston suburb of Duxbury in January 2023. She then cut herself with a knife and jumped from a second-story window in a failed attempt to end her own life that left her paralyzed.

But defense attorney Kevin Reddington during his closing argument in Plymouth County Superior Court urged jurors to find her not guilty by reason of insanity on the three counts of first-degree murder she faces, presenting a defense that throughout the trial has revived a nationwide debate over how postpartum mental health in women is treated in the United States.

"Her mind was gone," he said.

He said testimony and evidence throughout the trial showed that for months leading up to the "horrific" killings, Clancy had been seeking treatment as she struggled with her mental health and suicidal thoughts following the birth of her third child.

Reddington argued that prosecutors had manipulated evidence to "assassinate" the character of a "young, vibrant hardworking" mother who killed her children and tried to commit suicide, acts he said occurred after she heard a voice he blamed on "the damn medicine and the lousy medical care that she got."

"This young lady is not guilty of the killing of her children because she was suffering from a disease and defect, as his honor instructed you," he told jurors. "And they're not going to be able to prove otherwise."

Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Sprague did not dispute that Clancy had struggled with her mental health. But she said that was not the question – but instead whether on Jan. 24, 2023, she could appreciate that it was wrong to kill her children but did it anyway before attempting to commit suicide.

"This case is not about our mental health system or how it treats women," she told jurors. "That's a distraction to get you angry and passionate about an important issue, but an issue that's not on trial here."

Following closing arguments, Judge William Sullivan finished instructing jurors on the law, picked a foreperson and sent the 12 jurors who will decide the case out to begin their deliberations. "It's not going to be an easy task," Sullivan said.

Potential life sentence

Clancy, a former labor and delivery nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital, faces life in prison without parole if convicted of first-degree murder for killing Cora, 5; Dawson, 3; and 8-month-old Callan on Jan. 24, 2023.

If found not guilty due to lack of criminal responsibility or by reason of insanity, she would be committed to a state psychiatric hospital for evaluation. Jurors also have the option to find her guilty of murder in the second degree or manslaughter.

The five-week trial drew comparisons to the case of Andrea Yates, a Texas woman who drowned her five children in a bathtub in 2001.

After an appeals court overturned her initial murder conviction, she was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 2006. Her lawyers had said that she suffered from severe postpartum psychosis.

In her closing argument, Sprague focused on evidence showing how shortly before the killings, Clancy sent her then-husband, Patrick, out to pick up a food order and to a pharmacy after mapping on her phone the time it would take for him to return.

He spoke on the phone briefly with his wife while at the pharmacy. Upon his return, he discovered her lying on the ground in the backyard with cuts on her wrists and neck. She told him she had tried to kill herself.

He said he asked where the children were, and she said they were in the basement. After he called 911 and first responders arrived, Patrick Clancy said he ran to the basement and discovered them with exercise bands tied around their necks.

Witnesses during the trial including Patrick, other family members and a hospital chaplain testified that Clancy later told them that she had heard a man's voice tell her that if she did not act, she would lose her chance.

But Sprague argued that Clancy was "making up the voice," claiming that experts say it would make no sense for her to have heard it only once and that Clancy only began speaking about having heard it after she was in the hospital following her failed suicide.

Sprague argued that Clancy clearly knew that what she was doing was wrong and had sent her husband out on the errand to provide her enough time to execute her plan to take the children to the basement one by one to strangle them before then trying to kill herself. She made no mention of a voice when she spoke to Patrick Clancy on the phone when he was at the pharmacy, Sprague said.

"It was a choice to take them with her," Sprague said. "It was a horrific choice. And it's a choice that we don't want to think about that a mother made because that doesn't make us feel safe or comfortable in this world. But it's a choice she made."

Meta

Continued from Page 1NN

People react as lawyers from various states leave the courthouse in Oakland, California, on Aug. 26 after Meta Platforms agreed to the settlement.
MANUEL ORBEGOZO/REUTERS

before the settlement. Beyond a wave of lawsuits globally claiming it knowingly sought to addict children and caused a mental health crisis, Meta has also been under scrutiny over sexualized AI chatbot interactions with children.

The legal threats, long shrugged off by shareholders, drew fresh attention after Meta warned in April of potential losses from a global backlash against youth social media use, including bans seen in countries like Australia.

Pressuring rivals

Some legal experts said Meta structured the settlement to put pressure on competitors including TikTok, YouTube and Snapchat.

About 30% of the payout, along with stricter limits on teen usage, become due only if rival platforms accept comparable obligations and payments in settlements of their own.

The move puts "Meta and the state [attorneys general] on the same side against Meta's competitors," said Eric Goldman, a professor at Santa Clara University School of Law. "I can't imagine Meta's competitors are thrilled with its moves."

There were also doubts about the effectiveness of the guardrails Meta will roll out including restrictions on viewing the number of "likes" on a post and its plan to limit usage for children.

Internal tests showed Meta's daily user base would likely fall by around 0.09% if it disabled the like count, according to internal documents made public via leaks and legal discovery.

Still, Meta's legal troubles are not over. Both New Mexico and Florida were not part of the settlement, while the European Commission has threatened to fine Meta after preliminarily finding it in breach of a 2022 content-moderation law.

"The bellwether trial is over, but Meta's trials are just beginning," said James Grimmelmann, a professor of digital and information law at Cornell University.

Flood

Continued from Page 1NN

"The volume of water is continuing to increase, and so is the risk," Zhu Jinfeng, a researcher at the ministry's hydrology department, told state broadcaster CCTV.

Chinese rescuers had yet to reach the worst-hit area on the Chinese side of the border, the Gyirong border crossing, by late Aug. 27, state media reports indicated, as crews worked to clear debris from the key access road leading to the area.

The Gyirong border port has a key role in China's Belt and Road network linking the country to South Asia, with logistics zones and parking lots built there in the past decade.

Dramatic footage on Aug. 26 showed enormous torrents of muddy water and debris tearing through structures in the border crossing area within seconds and engulfing people trying to flee.

All the buildings in the border-crossing complex were destroyed by the mudslide, footage filmed from a military helicopter surveying the area and broadcast on state television showed. The entire compound was reduced to an unrecognizable mass of destruction, caked in thick, muddy debris and almost devoid of any sign of civilization, the footage showed.

The tally of missing in Tibet's Gyirong County was 558, CCTV said on Aug. 27, including 260 foreign nationals. China said the death toll stayed at three.

China's Premier Li Qiang, the country's No. 2 official, arrived at the disaster-stricken site in Gyirong on Aug. 27, state-run Xinhua news agency said. The visit suggested Beijing was treating the disaster as a matter of the highest national priority.

A drone view shows mud covering buildings and other property in Trishuli, Nepal, on Aug. 27. NAVESH CHITRAKAR/REUTERS

Rescue personnel transport stranded residents with a bulldozer in Nepal's Nuwakot district on Aug. 27. PRAKASH MATHEMA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

'Exploded like a bomb'

In Nepal, the Red Cross said that entire villages had been destroyed and impassable roads and bridges had left communities cut off. The full scale of the disaster remains unclear, it added.

Nepal's Home Minister Sudhan Gurung said the focus remained on finding survivors. Rescue teams located 100 missing Indian visitors, mostly pilgrims, and 25 Chinese workers in the worst-hit region around Trishuli.

The flood "came in suddenly and exploded like a bomb," said survivor Janak Bahadur in Nepal's Devighat. "The river looked small from a distance but it suddenly started overflowing and swept through."

The missing foreigners in Nepal belonged to more than two dozen countries, including 288 from India, 63 from the United States, 51 from Malaysia, 34 from Australia, 33 from Britain and 25 from Canada.

Ganesh Aryal, the administrator of Chitwan district, said authorities had recovered 103 bodies from the river system in his district, which is about 60 miles away in the plains from the worst-hit region of Trishuli.

With local hospitals unable to accommodate all the bodies, district authorities were setting up tents and making arrangements for families to claim their dead relatives, he said.

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah left by road to assess the flood situation in one of the worst-affected districts of Nuwakot, his office said on social media. The disaster is a major challenge for Shah's five-month-old government but officials said the country had systems and officials who have experience in handling such tragedies.

Climate change could be factor

Chinese government geologist Guo Zhaocheng said the ice-avalanche debris flow that caused the mudslide moved at about 165 feet per second, leaving people little time to react, and extended for more than 12 miles. Guo said a high-altitude ice avalanche triggered the debris flow, which picked up glacial moraine as it moved down a channel before becoming a mudslide that struck port facilities and areas on both sides of the China-Nepal border.

Early reports had suggested an earthquake in the area could have triggered the glacier's collapse. But the U.S. Geological Survey said an earthquake with magnitude initially reported as 4.4 was in fact seismic energy generated by the collapse of glacial rock and ice, followed by debris flow.

Scientists cautioned against describing climate change as the sole and immediate trigger for the glacier collapse, but said rising temperatures and melting ice probably played a role.

"Climate change is generating conditions that can destabilize high-mountain rock and ice," said Simon Cox, chief scientist at the Mountains to Sea program at Earth Sciences New Zealand.

Warming can reduce the support provided by ice, increase meltwater and alter patterns of freezing, thawing and rainfall, making large collapses more likely in some places, Cox said.

Disaster hit Hindu pilgrims

Many of this week's victims were pilgrims headed to Kailash Mansarovar, a high-altitude site in Tibet revered by Hindus and Buddhists, among others.

Mount Kailash, which Hindus believe to be the home of Lord Shiva and which lies on the banks of Lake Mansarovar, is also held sacred by many.

"There are no human-made things, no human settlement left. Everything is just flat," Sagar Pandey, the chief executive of a Himalayan tourism operator, told Reuters after flying over the zone in a helicopter. "So anyone in the hotel, the restaurant, or the car, I believe that everybody is gone."

Around the world, relatives of those missing were desperate for information about their whereabouts.

Vasanthi Muniandy, whose sister Vennila was part of a Hindu pilgrimage group from Malaysia, said she had last heard from her after Vennila had crossed into Tibet from Nepal.

"I am totally broken. My sister is very important to me," Vasanthi said. "I really want her to come back. I don't have anyone but her. I just want her to come back home. I want her to be safe."

War

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were then, and strong spending and investment – including a continuing boom in artificial intelligence – have helped cushion the blow.

Iran is wounded but not defeated

Iran's military and economy have suffered severe damage, but Tehran can still launch attacks and keep the Strait of Hormuz closed.

In May, the top U.S. military commander for the Middle East, Adm. Brad Cooper, told Congress that U.S. forces had destroyed 161 Iranian naval vessels and disabled 82% of its air-defense systems. He said Iran's air force, which had previously flown up to 100 sorties a day, was no longer conducting missions.

Even so, Iran retains drones and missiles and has successfully attacked shipping and U.S. military installations around the region.

In March, Reuters reported that the United States could determine with certainty that it has destroyed only about a third of Iran's vast missile arsenal. The status of around another third was less clear but bombings likely damaged, destroyed or buried those missiles in underground tunnels and bunkers, sources told Reuters at the time.

The war has killed thousands and deepened Iran's economic crisis, worsening inflation and disrupting trade. In July, food inflation hit 128% year-on-year, according to Iran's Statistical Center.

But it has also pushed political divisions into the background and prompted a tougher crackdown on dissent.

The graves of people killed during the strike on the Shajareh Tayyebeh primary school are seen at a cemetery in Minab, Iran, on Aug. 10. ATTA KENARE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Middle East region has been destabilized, exposing U.S. allies

The U.S.-Israeli war was meant to remove Iran as a threat to the Middle East, but analysts say it has instead emboldened Tehran and left the region less secure. Iranian missile and drone attacks on U.S.-allied Gulf Arab states hit U.S. military and diplomatic facilities and disrupted air travel.

Iran's attacks on shipping, combined with a Houthi blockade targeting Saudi-linked traffic in the Red Sea, have raised insurance and transport costs across the region. The effect extends well beyond individual attacks on vessels, disrupting supply chains and adding to uncertainty for Gulf economies.

It could take longer for Iran to produce a nuclear weapon

U.S. and Israeli attacks during an earlier assault in June 2025 and in the opening phase of the current war badly damaged three of Iran's known enrichment plants and sites suspected of weapons-related work, while Israeli strikes have killed leading nuclear scientists.

U.S. intelligence assessments in May put Iran's estimated nuclear "breakout time" – the time needed to produce enough fissile material for a bomb – at up to one year, from up to six months before the war.

Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is Trump's top stated goal for the war.

But the true state of the program is uncertain because U.N. inspectors have not returned to Iran's nuclear sites. The International Atomic Energy Agency has been unable to verify the location of roughly 970 pounds of uranium enriched to 60% since the 2025 strikes. That stockpile could potentially be further enriched to weapons grade at a covert facility.

Iran has long denied seeking a nuclear bomb.

U.S. military readiness has been diminished

Since the war started, 18 U.S. service members have been killed and over 750 injured. The U.S. military has also lost drones and aircraft, both to Iranian fire and accidents. A May Congressional Research Service report said 42 U.S. military aircraft had been lost in the conflict.

Munitions are a major concern. Reuters reported the military has used "virtually all" of its global supply of certain precision missiles.

A Center for Strategic and International Studies estimate said that by July, the United States had used about 65% of its Patriot interceptors and reduced its THAAD [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense] interceptor stockpile by at least 38%.

Washington has shifted fighter jets, warships and other assets to the Middle East from Europe and the Asia-Pacific, extending deployments and raising questions about readiness elsewhere.

The USS Gerald R. Ford spent more than a year deployed while lawmakers raised concerns about conditions aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln after 200 consecutive days at sea.